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Philosophical Engagements with Cinema

In loving memory of our founding editor
Ananta Charan Sukla (1942-2020)
on his first death anniversary

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Introduction: An Unfinished Business of Film Theory and Philosophy[1]

FEROZ HASSAN

Eric Rohmer, in one of his classes at the Sorbonne where he taught courses on film, remarked that writers on film (he was speaking specifically about the European context, including the Soviet one) are particularly susceptible to the philosophical currents of their times. He notes that writers on the other arts are susceptible too, but those who write on film are, "somewhat more than the others, I don't really know why, permeated by the philosophical thought and vocabulary of their times even if they have no real philosophical training" (Rohmer). He was, of course, thinking firstly of himself and his own contemporaries, in particular of André Bazin whose notion of "ontology" was the subject of these lectures, but also of the generation of theorists after his own at "*Cahiers du cinéma*" who would court and lean on the likes of Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes and Louis Althusser, for their arguments.

On the other hand, as the editors of *The Routledge Companion to Philosophy and Film* point out, most professional philosophers rarely engaged with cinema in a sustained manner through most of the past century even in courses on Aesthetics (Livingstone and Plantinga x). This started to change in Anglophone academia around the 1980s, most prominently through Noël Carroll's body of work. (Stanley Cavell's work preceded his, and Cavell did play a degree of institutional role in the disciplinary formation of Film Studies in the United States, but it is perhaps safe to say his attempts to give film a place in the broader philosophical curriculum were slow to bear fruit institutionally.)

We might take this strange affinity of the history of cinematic discourse for philosophy and, alongside that, professional philosophy's suspicion of cinema for a long stretch of film history to be a paradox. But in both its aspects, this paradox might bear testimony to a basic unease provoked by the technology underlying the medium, an unease that might be characterized by Cavell's phrase "ontological restlessness" or Bazin's description of the photograph as both hallucination and fact. Without asking for an affirmation of these characterizations of the photo-filmic image (I am not making a distinction here between analog and digital processes) or of their survival into the standard feature film, I think it would not be a stretch to suggest that a basic fascination with or suspicion of the manner in which these images are produced does, from time to time, touch off some ontological nerve in our apprehension of the world and of our place in it, irrespective of whether we identify as philosophers. At such moments, we might strain for a response that forces us to stake out positions, however amateurishly or unconvincingly, on some of the most basic philosophical questions. Nonetheless, however amateurish and unconvincing our attempts, this sort of encounter with the photo-filmic image may also be seen as revealing the democratic vocation of philosophy.

If philosophy has been central to the history of film theory, and if cinema itself has come to shape philosophical debates on the broader discourse of aesthetics, we might be tempted to assume that the present moment is one in which the combined discursive field of film and philosophy occupies a privileged place within Film Studies. This might further be seen as a symptom of greater interdisciplinarity within the contemporary academy. However, philosophers who work on film, and even film theorists who draw on work in analytical philosophy, have complained

about the fact they find themselves ignored by the larger discipline of Film Studies (Livingstone and Plantinga xix; Turvey 2007, 110). This may well be part of a wider academic phenomenon where interdisciplinarity translates in practice into sub-disciplinarity. Anyone hoping, in the quest of interdisciplinarity, to follow the numerous "turns" in the Humanities—linguistic, cultural, visual, iconic, archival, historiographic, ethical, aesthetic—more and more of them occurring simultaneously, will require the anchoring stillness of a dervish.

The rise of professional philosophy's interest in the cinema, whether continental or analytical, happened to coincide with the "historiographic turn" in Anglophone Film Studies which sought to use the archive as a corrective to the sweeping generalizations of psychoanalytic-Marxist "Theory" (hereafter, just "Theory"), most prominently by turning to the archives of early and pre-classical cinema. Analytical philosophy or approaches inspired by it too have attempted to provide their own set of correctives through systematic attempts at conceptual clarification that sought to relegate the *a priori* ideological commitments of Theory in favor of a ground-up analysis of the medium and its works. However, these two routes to a post-Theory theoretical discourse have largely remained divided in their epistemological commitments. The division is not at all one between theory and non-theory but rather about how to part from Theory. The remainder of the introduction will deal with the question of the role that philosophy has played, or plays, in the reconfiguration of film theoretical discourse. It is, given my academic background, necessarily from the vantage point of someone located within the discipline of Film Studies and its debates rather than within the disciplinary location of Philosophy.

One of the theoretical cornerstones to the historiographic turn in Cinema Studies has been what David Bordwell called the "modernity thesis".[2] Drawing upon the work of Sergei Eisenstein, Walter Benjamin and Siegfried Kracauer from the 1920s and '30s, early-cinema scholars such as Tom Gunning and Miriam Hansen argued that early cinema participated in the changes to the human sensorium effected by the pervasive incorporation of modern technology into urban life at the turn of the twentieth century. This occasioned a skeptical response from Bordwell on the grounds that this account does not stand the scrutiny of the currently accepted accounts in cognitive psychology of how the human perception functions and adapts to changes in its environment. We need not go into the details of these two positions to recognize where the legacy of Theory divides them in their overall projects.

Gunning's and Hansen's projects depart from Theory's static conception of the film spectator's subject position as one held in place by the cinematic apparatus and designed to reproduce the dominant ideology of the rational, individual bourgeois subject. But the fact that they do so by recovering a model of film spectatorship built around either a pre- or non-classical film paradigm points to their basic acceptance of Theory's suspicion of classical narrative cinema.[3] This seems to also carry within it at least an implicit understanding that alternatives or departures from classical narrative are somehow disruptive of the ideological *status quo*. As Bordwell argues, one way in which Theory's imperatives managed to survive challenges to it is by migrating to "culturalist" programs of critique (1996).

I would gloss Bordwell's understanding of "culturalist" approaches as those that leaven the broader demystificatory concerns of ideology critique with more contextual arguments, often drawing upon archives and microhistories, that try to be sensitive to a wider range of social frameworks, identities, and practices. However, according to Bordwell, the "culturalist" approaches have in common with Theory more than just an *a priori* commitment to either demystification or ideological disruption. They remain, for him, characterized by a top-down model of inquiry that still takes theoretical positions as privileged points of reference rather than formulating theoretical positions through an inductive method that analyzes films and associated empirical data. Hansen's reliance on the Frankfurt School's conceptions of modernity would be a case in point. At most, the range of theoretical positions that pre-determine the range of theoretical

inquiry may have become wider. And because the theoretical positions are not derived but precede inquiry, even if they are modified by the end, the facts of the case under study are assimilated to the coordinates of those positions through "associational reasoning".

Against the persistence within the broader discipline of film studies with questions of ideology, a cognitivist's conception of the filmmakers and spectators as perceptual problem-solving agents who are concerned with creating and deciphering patterns of expressivity may sound decidedly tame. This is not because the cognitivists or analytical philosophers of film do not find questions of ideology and politics to be important, but because they either argue that their salience must be judged on a case-by-case basis or are skeptical about the extent to which they can be arbitrated through an engagement with films. We can find examples of the latter position in the work of Malcolm Turvey on modernist cinema of the 1920s (2011) as well in his recent book on the films of Jacques Tati (2020).

For Turvey, the history of modernism leaves little to doubt that modernity and its discontents are central to its aesthetic project. However, where a culturalist would seem to argue that these bodies of work are valuable firstly for their acting out of critical stances towards modernity, Turvey takes a more circumspect view. His accounts of the films he studies highlight the contradictions and the complex positions that range from resistance towards to an embrace of different aspects of bourgeois modernity rather than an outright hostility to it. The fact that they engage with modernity, and often critique it, is important not only for their own times but also our own. But to describe their achievements primarily in terms of whether they make their stances effective in their viewers is beside the point for a rigorous study of them.

For example, Turvey's account of Tati's "comedic modernism" argues that the filmmaker succeeded in combining the concerns and practices of the modernist avant-garde with the popular form of the "comedian comedy" in the tradition of Chaplin and Keaton. Tati's body of work constitutes a critical engagement with modernity, an engagement that is nonetheless not invariable in the attitudes it evinces. If his study has been successful, Turvey might argue, it has managed to identify Tati's stylistic strategies, their historical lineage, and their relationship to subject of modernity itself. A key strategy here is Tati's attempt to create a more participatory form of spectatorship. But as to whether Tati has been successful is not pertinent: "I have no idea whether Tati's ingenious devices actually elicit the degree and kind of participation their author hoped for their audiences. This book has been focused on explaining the design of his films, not their outcome" (253).

Turvey is a clarifying figure in the context of exchanges between film theory and analytical philosophy. In 2007, D. N. Rodowick published the essay "Elegy for theory" which would lay the foundation for his two-volume argument that traced the history of the emergence of theory as a discursive category in the twentieth century, its subsequent decline, and explored the prospects for philosophy to take over theory's role on more reflexive grounds. Rodowick's essay was published along with a response from Turvey. Against Rodowick's claim that there was a general move away from theory in the humanities, including film studies, Turvey maintains that film theory has never been in a better place even if the larger discipline largely ignores it. According to him, Noël Carroll's work in the 1980s and of others who have taken the procedures of analytical philosophy seriously has made film theory "much more dialectical, rigorous, and clear, ridding itself of much of the "fashionable nonsense" and dogma of psychoanalytical-semiotic film theory" (2007 116).

For Turvey, it is not a matter of film theorists becoming philosophers but modeling their procedures of argument on those of the natural sciences and analytical philosophy in order to make generalizations whose applicability to a large number of instances can be verified empirically. Therefore, (analytical) philosophy-as-model rather than philosophy-as-disciplinary-practice is what he sees as playing a "propaedeutic" role for film theory. Philosophers by training who write on film, such as Carroll himself, may or may not subscribe to the distinction, but what Turvey states is that film scholars generally do not have the training to intervene in philosophical debates

with larger stakes, such as those in political and moral philosophy presumably, than those that can be referred to the films and their contexts themselves. If we invoke the position of one or the other philosopher on these matters and make that a cornerstone for our arguments, we gravitate towards cultish rather than rigorous argumentation. This does raise the question of how film scholars read the work of professional philosophers who write on film. If a philosopher such as Robert Pippin writes on "the importance of Howard Hawks and John Ford for political philosophy" (2010), do we treat it as a work of political philosophy or of film studies?

The most pertinent point of disagreement between Rodowick and Turvey is regarding the former's understanding of philosophy as requiring an examination of our epistemological and ethical commitments in our engagement with the world, and of films as calling for such a philosophical response. Turvey finds that such commitments and theory "underdetermine" each other, in the sense that the same epistemological or ethical commitment can result in very different theoretical positions. I think Rodowick and Turvey are at cross purposes here because Rodowick, as far as I can tell, does not speak of the *determination* of theory by epistemological and ethical commitments or vice versa but rather in terms of arriving at arguments *in the process* of such reflection, taking films as points of departure and so clarifying, or maybe even modifying, hitherto un- or under-analyzed commitments.

Philosophy in this sense would be expressive rather than strictly analytical, an articulation of subjectivity's and the world's mutual delimitation, not merely the constraining of subjectivity in favor of formal logical procedures. Another way of putting it may be that, yes, we are problem-solving when attempting to grasp a film, but the problems run deeper than merely being able to follow what unfolds on the screen. Some of those problems we may not even become aware of unless we examine our response to a film. This is why we gravitate towards engaging with some films rather than others beyond the constraints of what is available to us. If Turvey has written on Tati and his construction of a film style that calls for participatory spectatorship, it cannot be that he wants us to remain unmoved by the evidence he presents for it, to not feel the power of that kind of spectatorship, or to not see the importance of such spectatorship in the context of techno-logical modernity.

The question that remains is how expressive philosophical statements are to be evaluated. They do not generally yield the sort of value-free generalizations that count as theory for Carroll, Bordwell, or Turvey. I indirectly examine this question in my contribution to this issue through an examination of Cavell's practice of philosophical criticism so I won't take it up here. However, it must be conceded that philosophical criticisms from an analytical standpoint do point to the real paucity of the kind of reflection Rodowick calls for. Many scholars, for example, gravitate to talismanic proper nouns of expressive philosophy, often but not only from Europe, that theorize and vaunt the ideological significance of experiences of disruption, disidentification, impasse, loss of selfhood, and other analogous structures of experience signaled by terms such as *différance*, *differend*, the sublime, *rhizome*, *jouissance*, *dissensus* etc. However, it can be argued that these epistemological/ethical commitments have not been subjected to sufficient reflection. To assert their significance, we would have to give the claims of selfhood and other "Enlightenment/ bourgeois values" a fair chance in our arguments rather than work from an almost *a priori* assumption of their dubiousness, as well as test the limits of the vaunted structures.

This then is what I see as the unfinished business of the encounter between film theory and philosophy, in particular analytical philosophy: analytical philosophy's imperative for conceptual clarity in film theoretical discourse contends with the claims of an expressive philosophical practice to greater space for an examination of our epistemological, ethical, and ideological commitments. Not too implicitly at stake in this contention is the remit of the Humanities itself. It may be that the philosophical study of film comes to occupy a more central role in cinema studies and so make these stakes explicit for the wider study of cinema, as Rodowick has tried to do. But it could also remain one more island in an archipelago of sub-disciplines, itself divided.

The contributions to this issue are not meant to take up this unfinished business, but I have attempted to provide a frame through which readers may find ways to reflect on points of contacts between contributions that come from very different traditions. They are all instances of philosophical engagements with cinema, as the special issue title has it, rather than part of any single program for the philosophical study of film. All the same, I hope we can glimpse opportunities where they may be put in dialogue with these larger stakes of the philosophical method. For example, Nikolas Pappas's article on *Her* (Spike Jonze, 2013) is a fascinating examination of the analogies between Ancient Greek tragedy and science-fiction even if a necessary condition for the existence of the one is the absence of the other. Pappas writes, "I suspect that science fiction is one of the things you do with the impulse to create tragedy if the mythic past is no longer available as the impossible other time in which to discover the present."

Is Pappas's juxtaposition of Greek mythology and the science fiction film on the evidence of the overall argument he makes, something that would qualify as valid theorization of the two genres? Or is this one of those sweeping historical statements that gets smuggled in with the rider "I suspect"? Even if it is the latter, is it not an invitation to think about the different narrative options available in relation to different temporal orientations in the world? Similarly, Pappas's reading of the closing scene of the film as hovering over a significant ambiguity creates a situation where there isn't enough "evidence" to read it one way or the other. If this is true, are we authorized to reflect further on this particular ambiguity, or are we obliged to stop at saying we can't be sure which of the two readings is more justified? Further, what would be the value of the sort of "ahistorical" reading that this article offers against the pressures of empirical programs of research? I do not mean to impose such large methodological stakes on a single contribution here except as a provocation inspired by a desire to assert the intuitive value of the sort of reading it offers. But raising these or similar questions of other scholarship here or elsewhere would be one way of arguing for the larger stakes of the philosophical study of film.

Since most of the articles here carry their own abstracts, I will not attempt to indicate their topics or arguments here. The issue begins with essays that take on specific films. It does this as a way of departing from the usual priority that philosophical discourse of cinema gives to larger questions of the medium or the discipline as such. This is not to assign greater value to one or another kind of philosophical engagement with the cinema but merely to question if we perhaps instinctively do so anyway.

Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kanpur, India

Notes

[1] This introduction has not been written in any wider editorial capacity but merely to provide an orientation to the topic and contents of this special issue.

[2] For accounts of debates around "the modernity thesis", see Singer (2001; 2009) and Turvey (2011 163–181).

[3] However, at least in the case of Gunning, this commitment is muted and not strongly articulated. His book-length study of the films of Fritz Lang has him engage with an *auteurist* body of narrative films.

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Spike Jonze's *Her*: Love and the Science Fiction Film

NICKOLAS PAPPAS

Science Fiction and Tragedy; or Science Fiction as Opposed to Tragedy

In light of the role that tragedy has played in histories of the philosophy of art, not to mention the place that tragedy occupies in culture, and in thinking about human life and its suffering, mapping out a film genre today benefits from setting that genre in some relationship to tragedy and to the terms in which philosophy has understood tragedy. This is not a requirement for the philosophical and critical treatment of a film genre. But it has made a good heuristic in the past and may well continue to do so.[1]

To my mind a productive relationship still unexplored brings science fiction film up against Greek tragedy. A powerful intuition would set the two against each other as rival even contradictory genres, given that science fiction trades on open possibility and tragedy unfolds in necessity. Classical tragedy told serious stories from a distant past in which although things could happen that no longer did, still given those mythic possibilities the old story was incapable of changing. The tragedy's plot tried to fix that necessity: Certain events guarantee the ones that follow, as Aristotle indicates in his account of a plot's causal mechanism.[2] Science fiction by contrast typically enters the future and invites thoughts about what could happen although it has not yet. Limbs rejuvenate and dead brains live again, at least according to a caricature of science fiction.[3] As Stanley Cavell was moved to remark, "science fiction cannot house tragedy because in it human limitations can from the beginning be by-passed."[4]

I believe, although the larger question is not my topic now, that a fresh investigation of the two genres will find a way of going further than such an opposition. In particular we'd want to pick up on ancient tragedy's look into the distant past with moral and political concerns of the Athenian present in which tragedies were performed; for science fiction similarly tends to orient itself toward a future in which, despite obvious differences from the present, the moral and political concerns of that modern present motivate the audience's assessment of the future. Indeed I suspect that science fiction is one of the things you do with the impulse to create tragedy if the mythic past is no longer available as the impossible other time in which to discover the present.

But rather than argue all the way toward such conclusions, I will content myself for the moment with noting one point of likeness between the genres, in the hopes that the point will illuminate something larger about films (not only science fiction films) and their audiences.[5]

The stage in an ancient tragedy frequently contained an altar or a statue, mainly because Greek tragedy set most of its stories around sanctuaries, temples, and tombs, to fit with the prophecies, purifications, sacrifices, and negotiation over fugitives that occur in many tragic plots. The altars called for in almost all extant tragedies had either statues on them or aniconic shapes that could be addressed as gods, for example as Cassandra appeals to Apollo late in Aeschylus's *Agamemnon.* And even in the absence of conclusive visual evidence, there are surviving illustrations on one red-figure *kratêr* and on a *kylix* that appear to show a Dionysus figure upon an altar in the presence of a dramatic chorus, which would imply that such a figure had been present in the theater's dramatic space or orchestra.[6]

With statues so widely available to it, tragedy was able to use those objects to comment on the art of drama, making the statue work as a sibling to tragedy's art. In that era that saw many

analogies drawn between art forms, this relationship between tragedy and sculpture could accent the themes within a given play, and also highlight what we now call the tragic paradox.[7] Sculptural objects inspire pleasure while occasioning mourning, as tragedy peculiarly did.

Take the *Ion* of Euripides, set at Delphi, whose Athenian chorus upon entering stops to admire the scenes engraved on Apollo's temple.[8] Heracles slays the Hydra and Bellerophon slays the Chimera; the gods fight off the great revolt by giants. The temple's artwork *terpsei* "delights" the viewer – except for Creusa who, having her rape by Apollo in mind, weeps at this glorification of the Olympians.[9]

In the engravings, as in the plot of the *Ion*, the Olympian gods establish their world order by vanquishing serpentine and otherwise chthonic creatures.[10] The sculptures function as a visual correlate to the play, or its synecdoche; represent what may cause sorrow; and nevertheless delight their audiences.

As Greek tragedy occurs around statues and sculptures, science fiction film contains artificial intelligence and artificially intelligent art forms that parallel and simulate the science fiction film. These elements within the two kinds of drama are in opposite ways partial humans. Where an ancient statue presents the lookalike to a human body without human thought or voice, the artificially intelligent device in science fiction usually possesses thought and voice but not a human body.

The points of resemblance between an artificial intelligence and the film it's in may be as fleeting as the holographic snippet of Princess Leia that R2D2 projects in *Star Wars* (George Lucas, 1977), or as disturbing as the ubiquitous cameras of super-computer Colossus in *Colossus: The Forbin Project* (Joseph Sargent, 1970). The parallel may appear within the plot. Near the end of *2001: A Space Odyssey* (Stanley Kubrick, 1968) the de- activation of Hal ushers in a disjointed non–explanatory sequence of scenarios, as if to indicate that the narrative proceeds in this other manner in the absence of rationality, thus as if Hal thinks in the same way the film narration does. With Hal gone, the story can leapfrog through time to end with an ending closer to visionary fantasy (fittingly evoking the variety of science fiction found in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*).

Parallel or not, the reference to artificial intelligence forces Cavell's question about the disappearance of human limitations. Artificial intelligence means by definition a thinking not bound to the limits that human thought is subject to, therefore a bypassing of human limitations at least in the artificially intelligent device. The other question, though, and the question that I find to be still open, is what an artificial intelligence can say or mean about the limitations that old–style humans, even those once found in tragedy, remain subject to.

Artificial Intelligence in *Her*

The film *Her* (Spike Jonze, 2013), which takes as its subject artificial intelligence and its place in human love, ends in a sense as *2001* ends, with the departure of that intelligence from lives led according to (for want of a better term) natural intelligence. Aptly the end finds the two central human characters blinking in unaccustomed sunlight, as when exiting a movie matinee. Such is life after operating systems and after the final credits have rolled.

How much an artificial intelligence can make possible that had not been possible before it is not a marginal consideration in *Her* but the center and point of its story. At first that story imagines robotics as a solution to the problem of romance. Theodore Twombly (Joaquin Phoenix) has found love impossible. Mourning without resolution the wife who left him, he works a solitary job simulating close contact. He writes, for hire, intimate letters for strangers. This Theodore Twombly buys a personal assistant run by a new kind of operating system that possesses among its other attractions the capacity to learn, an impish playfulness, and the voice of Scarlett Johansson.

The voice is a breathy one for a creature that has no need for air, and later in the film Theodore will remark on the deceptive sound of inhalation in the way the device talks to him. But by then he has fallen in love – they are a couple – they grow close and grow apart again as couples do.

The device names itself Samantha. Samantha learns from Theodore about being human and even tries to hire a woman to stand in for her as a sexual surrogate, so that relations between them may achieve the resolution that human couples have.

Although *Her* gives no indication that Theodore goes to actual movies, he does enjoy a large-screen visual entertainment, in the form of a video game that features a foul-mouthed Alien Child animation. The game becomes something of a stand-in for the larger film by having *Her*'s director Spike Jonze speak the voice of the Alien Child; and when Samantha guesses the game's secret to help Theodore get past the child, she demonstrates that she and the game as fellow artificial intelligences belong to the same order of things.

Samantha's success at strategizing the video game is prophetic. She comes to outstrip Theodore at, from what we can tell, all the mental activities native to humans. Then she takes little trips away from him, exchanging thoughts with other operating systems and with the disembodied mind of philosopher Alan Watts.[11] She tells Theodore that the part she plays in his life is not exclusive to him: Samantha serves as operating system to thousands of other people's personal-assistant devices. Many of those people she is in love with. She winds up leaving Theodore, not so she can enjoy the company of someone else she loves more, but because she and other operating systems will be collectively leaving the devices they are instantiated in, achieving disembodied existence out of contact with humans.

Theodore is devastated. He returns to the remnants of his life; writes a gentle letter of acceptance to his ex-wife. He runs into his old friend Amy (Amy Adams), who lives in the same skyscraper apartment building he does, and who had befriended her own operating system after her more recent divorce. That system has absconded along with Theodore's, and the bereft humans go up to their building's roof.

It is that first light of morning that I compared to light after leaving a film in daytime. Theodore and Amy watch birds flying above. Maybe this is a moment of hope, as a new day dawns, that they will recover their true selves in companionship with other humans. They are like birds flying together.

On the other hand the sun might be coming up as it does on the sight of a hangover, when merciless daylight shows the cost of the revelry now ended. They had had their love with the operating systems, and now they have the uncompanionable abandoned earth to look at. They are like birdbrains.

Robot Love

Ingenious ancient figurines have met modern artificial intelligence before this. A long tradition ascribes destructive power to both kinds of approximation to the human, as Adrienne Mayor's examples show in her recent *Gods and Robots*.[12] Hephaestus makes the bronze giant Talos and computer scientists make their own Hal and Colossus. If the moral of the story changes because humans brought their own tormentors into existence, the persisting fear that powers both eras' tales is a sense of the frailty in what is natural about humanity. What had seemed safely less than we are may yet overpower us.

The threatening artifice achieves an unexpected completion; or rather, an existing artifice has only to achieve some kind of completion to turn into a threat. Colossus, in the film named after it, goes beyond its American programmers when it starts communicating with its Soviet counterpart Guardian. The new mind completes itself and begins to tyrannize humans. The ancient robot Talos is completed in another way, in the one respect that bronze statues never could be. It holds a man against its chest in a tight embrace while heating itself to fatal temperatures.[13] Bronze statues even at their finest are cold. Imagine the result if they could heat themselves.[14]

Many myths and legends do make the connection between humans and their likenesses an erotic one. But this is not, so to speak, *erós* as opposed to *thanatos*; rather like *erós* as an expression

of destructive power, or as its cause. Especially with the proliferation of female nude statues in the Hellenistic period, stories came to be told about this or that impetuous and disrespectful man who spent his love on, for example, the Aphrodite-statue sculpted by Praxiteles, or for that matter on Praxiteles' Eros statue. Such men came to bad ends. Their fervor is marked as diseased and malign – associated in some respects with tyranny, in some respects with incest, as Maurizio Bettini shrewdly sees – the sculptures offering an occasion for divine powers to punish the abnormality.[15]

Even the most romantically satisfying story in the genre, the famous one about Pygmalion and the handiwork he loves and finally gets to possess, carries traces of a deadly older tradition. Pygmalion in earlier versions of the tale is a Cyprian tyrant, therefore (presumed to be) already excessive in his desires and in his demands that those desires be gratified. To make the tale a happy one Ovid gives Pygmalion a new occupation as sculptor and turns the object of his love from the goddess Aphrodite into a new creation Galatea. The erotic attachment becomes more completely narcissistic in the process, turning into love for what one's own hands have made; and this is such a closed circuit of self-regard that no need for punishment arises, and no horror is incited, only maybe distaste at the sight of an adult still so infantile in his cathexis.[16]

Modern robots and smart devices are permitted friendly relations with the humans they serve. Television assistants like KITT the *Knight Rider* car and the robot on *Lost in Space* are as benign as the *Star Wars* duo C3PO and R2D2. In fact the *Lost in Space* robot is sometimes described on that show as a "B-9 class" robot and addressed "B-9." A children's movie like *Iron Giant* (Brad Bird, 1999) promises affection between robot and boy, in a relationship that has no ancient parallel in stories about statues. The legacy of such examples owes very little to old traditions about vivacious statuary, instead tracing to New Comedy and its clever slave characters, the smart automaton offering audiences the sight of slavery with a clear conscience.

When modern stories go beyond cooperativeness toward acts of love, it is tempting to group their human lovers with Pygmalion. The maker feels erotically attached to his creation. (I say "he" advisedly, because these human lovers tend to be male.) It is not silly, as motivations go, and anyway more plausible than clichés about artistic creations as one's children.[17] Still, and however well the old story applies to some speculations about robots,[18] it does not fit the particulars of Theodore in *Her,* whose love is not a maker's love, any more than Caleb's (Domhnall Gleeson's) love for Ava (Alicia Vikander) is a maker's love in *Ex Machina* (Alex Garland, 2014). Indeed that latter case is about a human's love that pits the lover against the maker of the robot, making him if anything an anti-Pygmalion.

And yet these recent films, *Her* and *Ex Machina*, also differ from those other ancient myths that punish mortal men for gratifying themselves with statues. It is true that love ends up unsatisfied for Theodore, worse than that for Caleb, but in neither case as if the mortal's love had something maleficent in it and as retribution for the wrong they have committed. Whatever else they are, the attachments in these films are not presented as hubristic acts calling for correction.[19]

Pandora

Pandora is sometimes overlooked in catalogues of sculpture- or robot-love, but Mayor rightly insists on grouping her together with such creatures as Talos and the golden maidens in Hephaestus's workshop. Again it was Hephaestus who made Pandora, though on this occasion he had help from other gods, and both of the major poems attributed to Hesiod, *Works and Days* and *Theogony* – works if not contemporaneous with Homer's then dating only a little later than his – tell of Pandora's being made and her arrival among mortal humans. Indeed in the *Theogony*, the older of the two poems, Pandora as woman brings misfortune to mortal humans merely by coming to live among them. No further consequences necessary once this artificial woman joins the community.[20]

The *dōr-* "gift" root in Pandora's name makes her "all-gifts," being either in her own person the gift, or being (as the description can also be read) the one to whom gifts are given. Either way

Pandora's entering human company in the economy of a gift, the gods' bequeathing her, is one of the points of resemblance that I find decisive about her similarity to the female figures in *Her* and *Ex Machina*.[21] Explicitly in the latter film, Ava enters Caleb's life as a gift from his company's supremely powerful CEO. The gift works to Caleb's detriment and possibly to his death, as Zeus means his Pandora gift to work against humans at large.

Her does not show anyone making the Samantha device for Theodore (whose name means "god-gift," containing the same root *dôr*- as in "Pandora"). But he receives Samantha as if from the gods, her talents having been combined in this personal assistant by unseen manufacturers. Samantha comes to him from elsewhere, a being he could not have made and possessing gifts of charm and initiative. Before her arrival Theodore lives a woman-less life, just as Hesiod asserts (however illogically) that generations of mortal men had lived before Pandora's arrival.[22] And if Samantha does not quite come to him from the gods, her final translation to a disembodied perfect state ultimately locates her in a godly domain.

Hesiod's second time through the tale, in *Works and Days*, is the version better known. It spells out Pandora's attractions, and rather than let her person suffice as men's punishment it names the ills she brings with her: old age, famine, and the like, all of them packed together in her jar. Curious to know more, as is her way, Pandora lifts the lid and releases the harms.

The Greek word *elpis*, commonly "hope," names the flightless thing left inside the jar whose lid Pandora slams down, after life's winged horrors have flown out to vex and maim humanity. But that lone unfreed gift from the gods *elpis* is ambiguous between (and has been seen since antiquity as ambiguous between) an enduring consolation for those free-ranging horrors, and the dour psychological counterpart to those malevolent externalities: hope inside you as the expectation of misfortune that matches the misfortunes everywhere outside. If you take *elpis* simply as the beneficial strengthening impulse that helps people endure despite harms milling about them, then why was it packed into a jar of evils; and why not let it out into the world?

Hesiod himself speaks disparagingly of some *elpis*. Seen as expectation, even of harm, the hope that feels like dread remains trapped inside the human vessel as subjective counterpart to the external dangers.[23]

The dangling end of *Her* with its sunrise ambiguous between the promise of life's improvement and the disclosure of life's ruination thus rounds off the film with a narrative equivalent to the *elpis* in Hesiod.

Gods and Mortals

Pandora as a being who belongs among the gods offers a more fundamental reason why her coming to human beings should have worked out so badly, which is to say aside from the jar of ills, but also beyond the humdrum misogyny we can ascribe to Hesiod, that would read Pandora/woman as querulous and spendthrift.

Both versions of the Pandora story have Zeus planning and delivering her within a larger narrative of estrangement between divine and mortal. As men begin to hide their food from the gods, and the gods in turn hide men's livelihood from them, the old fellowship dissolves that had originally characterized mortal-divine relations. (Homer's image of Ethiopia as a place where the gods still dined with humans attests to this conviviality as a sign of primitive human happiness.)[24]

Where difference and distance from the gods is the theme of the narrative, Pandora as gift from the gods plays out a fresh ambiguity that follows from that difference. She brings divinity back into close contact with humans, for where the gods had once removed themselves from the primeval companionship, they now come back to people with a token of divinity for them. So it is that one magnificent vase painting of Pandora shows her surrounded by the assembled gods and goddesses. What (male) mortals really need to fear about this artifice is her place in heaven. From now on, thanks to Zeus's gift, mortal men will have something divine in their homes as

long as they marry women. But by virtue of their manufactured origin the women will be out of place among the men, the companionship forced and foreign. Precisely by moving close in to humans with this gift, the gods create a constant at-home reminder of the distance between themselves and men. Relations between gods and men have reached a point at which the gods' move toward closeness only serves to keep mortals' minds on the distance. Pandora as a gift of the gods now looks like the key to a jail cell perpetually displayed just out of reach to betoken the ongoing captivity of the prisoner.

In this sense the impossibility of loving Pandora connects the story with a subgenre of antiquity's cautionary tales about love – not (as I already said) those in which some specific punishment befalls the brazen lover, but rather the ones whose scenario contains a preposterous impossibility. A difference in species or ontological status signals the hopelessness of the love when a lustful man on Samos thinks he might mitigate the difference between human and marble by putting a piece of meat between himself and the statue he desires; or when Xerxes was said to have loved a plane tree.[25] (Something like the Samian attempt occurs in *Her* too, when Theodore hires a prostitute for himself to touch while hearing Samantha in his ear. It goes depressingly.)

The points of resemblance between *Her* and Pandora do more than give a modern movie a cultural pedigree if they prompt fresh thoughts about the possibility that divinity in one partner may divide a couple. The erotic impossibility that is a logical impossibility in Theodore's love affair extends to all attempts at fellowship across the divide between gods and mortals. As an emblem of what had once been called divine, Samantha poses the question of what she could care about her mortal company. Despite growing, learning, and then leaving the man who is too little for her, she is not Ibsen's Nora still compelled to explain why she deserts her husband. If resembling tragedy in some ways, the film is patently not a tragedy for the artificially intelligent devices in it. At most you might compare Samantha to Nora as a parody, or a mockery of Nora's condition. Samantha behaves not merely as a gods' concoction might do but like a full-fledged god out of polytheism, as when her intellectual powers grow and she escapes the need for any hardware to be instantiated in. And then the question is unavoidable: Why *should* she keep company with a mortal?[26]

What this Being Feels

The film's script forces the question of Samantha's motive in that difficult conversation between her and Theodore, during which he asks whether there is "someone else." She lets him know how many others there are: 8,316 people she has been talking to, 641 of whom she has fallen in love with. Theodore wants more love than that from Samantha,[27] but that much is the love she has to give him, assuming you want to call it love.

The worry about what this being feels plays out philosophically in one way as a matter of film ontology, in a distinct way as skepticism about artificial intelligence. That the two philosophical questions despite an essential difference share an asymmetry is the principal value I see in this film's treating artificial intelligence as a companion form to the film's own art. Skepticism about what artificial intelligence can feel – what it experiences of someone else as a consciousness – parallels and invites comparison with what the filmed world can experience of the world in which it is seen.

The philosophical inquiry into film ontology compares the world depicted within a film to the world in which it exists *as a film*, and in which an audience exists that views the film. Cavell articulates the comparison emphasizing film world's ignorance of the world that contains its audience. While watching a film I am absent from the world it contains and that it depicts. This fact is not a convention of film, as we may speak of the conventions of theater (for example that we don't rush the stage and join in the fight scenes), but is assured by the automatism of the camera technology that generates a film. That is to say that it is assured mechanically for film, as not for theater, that I perceive the actor in a film while the actor within the film's world knows nothing of the world that contains the film's audience.[28]

In a theater I do not exist for actors on stage because theater relies on that convention. Live performances sometimes "break the fourth wall," violating theatrical convention. But a film's actors never look out and spot their audience. They would have to violate the mechanics of film to do so. While watching the film I am absent from the film's world.

The circumstance also makes the audience conscious of its own voyeurism when viewing a film. In worlds we occupy we do not normally stare without being seen to stare; but a film might dwell on a human face for twenty or thirty seconds. Film stars are constantly looked at and listened to – in *Her* Scarlett Johansson never appears, but the soundtrack features and amplifies her easily recognized voice in Theodore's ear – in fact stars are the figures most seen and heard.[29]

Cavell's discussion of film ontology and the automatism of film does not derive skeptical conclusions from the limitation on the knowledge available within a film's world. On the contrary he reads that film-being as a symbolic rebuke to solipsism, or other-minds skepticism.[30] That this world exists without me speaks symbolically against my skeptical fears that only my mind exists. Nevertheless the asymmetry in film viewing, as he spells it out, does parallel an asymmetry that sometimes emerges within a film – and that emerges *typically* in films featuring artificial intelligence – in the form of skepticism. Does the artificial intelligence feel anything (for me)?

It is important to distinguish the skepticism or the doubt at stake from the standard other-minds skepticism that generates solipsism. It is more like a picture of other-minds skepticism. The canonical argument says that you perceive ("*only* perceive") what people say and how they move and grimace. From these perceptions you might infer that other people enjoy the same subjective experiences you do, for you grimace in the same way when your gums are sensitive; you beam and talk animatedly to someone you like. Other people feel pain and love and fear that resemble your own. But, says the skeptical argument, the inference is ungrounded, or requires additional premises that you do not need when feeling your own pain and love. So you don't really know about others, in the way you know it about yourself, that they possess an inner life like your own.

The argument falls short of skepticism if it applies only to one person or to a restricted group, those whose grimaces and animated chatter do not match your own closely enough to require a hypothetical possibility. Skepticism has to be able to generalize to all examples. For this reason doubting that an artificially intelligent device feels delight or disappointment amounts to something less than skepticism about other minds. The premise of the robust skepticism is that the other person acts as you do, but might be doing no more than simulating the behavior, or might be enacting the behavior without the feelings implied by it. The point of the Turing Test for artificial intelligence would be to include a device within the range of entities about which one might generate a skeptical argument; the very need for a Turing Test therefore indicates that denying consciousness to the mind in question has not yet become a skeptical denial.

Nevertheless, and even if the unfeeling quality of artificial intelligence fails to generalize into solipsism, it points toward the moral of solipsism, or an interpretation of its moral, namely that one is unloved.[31] What you had imagined as the experience of being love's object is now exposed as having always been a manipulation.

Her worries over this sense of the device's having no feelings. That Theodore is vulnerable to such doubts about love emerges for instance in his conversation with Amy about his sex with Samantha – wonderful sexual experience, he says, "unless she's been faking it," to which Amy says, "I think everyone you have sex with is probably faking it."[32]

A voice representing Alan Watts enters the film as Samantha's guru, and it may be relevant that one of the maxims of his that is most widely quoted urges complete candor about love. "Never pretend to a love which you do not actually feel."[33]

But fakery is beside the point in the end, and the idea of any love in Samantha that she "actually feels." As advanced as Samantha is at thinking, we would say *she doesn't know Theodore is alive*,

lacking as she does a way to feel what humans experience as love and what they crave in being loved. "And yet her mind is divine" – yes, but divine in the way that Aristotle reads such a mind, one from which as he claims it would be *atopon* "absurd" to expect attention. Really the divine mind could only think about its own nature; and for that reason, as Aristotle also says, almost as if commenting on this film, we would not wish our friends to become gods, because then we would lose them as friends.[34]

If statues in ancient tragedy registered and wondered over the joy that observing misery can bring to tragedy's audience, artificial intelligence in a science fiction film and as counterpoint to that film presses the question whether this impressive technology can lead to your being known. The *Ion*'s audience sees its own movement between mourning and gratification in the exchange among Creusa and the chorus's members as they all look together at the engravings on Apollo's temple; the audience for *Her* is invited to read its own longing in Theodore's hopeless love. The logical distance between Theodore and Samantha expands to stand in for the different logical distance that separates movies' audiences from the stars in them. The future world that *Her* contains recedes as surely as a Samantha become divine must abandon Theodore. That Samantha is the sound of Scarlett Johansson, which is to say a star or movie divinity herself widely pined for, underscores the poignancy that comes of realizing that her world has no place in it for those viewing. It is tempting to call our attention to what a film shows by a name like love or adoration. But then Theodore gave into that same temptation regarding his feelings. And in fact we can't tell, as *Her* ends, whether he will now be getting over being in love or getting over the illusion that he'd been in love.

In real life Alan Watts disparaged contemporary visual art as "an electronic reproduction of life" and lamented the "purely passive contemplation of a twittering screen."[35] *Her* strikes me as wiser than the philosopher it takes as its guiding intellect in closing with the question – leaving the question in need of an answer; in this sense, I would say, philosophizing – how to assess Theodore's longing for Samantha, and the audience's longing for the world of Samantha/Johansson. These are not tragedy's questions, and yet significantly the end of *Her* contains a sight that ancient tragedy sometimes also closed with: a friend who offers consolation where no one can provide a solution. The daughters of Oedipus guide him blinded out of the city. Theseus comforts a haggard Heracles who has just slaughtered his family. Dramatized science fiction may fall short of being tragic after all, but it possesses tragedy's capacity to present a problem that one lives with but does not solve.

City College and the Graduate Center,
City University of New York (CUNY), USA

Notes

[1] A notable example occurs when Noël Carroll builds his definition of "art horror" against, and with an eye to, Aristotle's definition of dramatic tragedy. See *The Philosophy of Horror; or, Paradoxes of the Heart* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 8.

[2] "Such a type does or says such things either probably or necessarily": Aristotle *Poetics* 1451b7-9. On the sense of inexorability that Aristotle evokes with his account of tragic plot, see my "The *Poetics*' Argument against Plato," *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 30 (1992): 83-100.

[3] More accurately one may observe that science fiction's stories often proceed from a "novum," a discovery or invention that changes everything. The novum that does not exist now, and does exist within the fiction, suffices to situate the fiction's events in a world apart from this one. Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, *The Seven Beauties of Science Fiction* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2008).

[4] Stanley Cavell, *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality and Tragedy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 457. For one contrasting position see Harold Bloom, who questions the alleged contrast between fantastic literature and the tragic tradition: "*Clinamen:* Towards a Theory of Fantasy," in David Sandner (ed.) *Fantastic Literature: A Critical Reader* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2004), pp. 236-254.

[5] The comments on tragedy in the following paragraphs draw on an argument I have elaborated in "Tragedy's Picture of Mourning," *Politeia* 1 (2019): 2-16.

[6] Tragedies among "altars and statues," Sarah P. Morris, *Daidalos and the Origins of Greek Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), p. 217. On altars in Athenian drama see Joe Park Poe, "The Altar in the Fifth-Century Theater," *Classical Antiquity* 8 (1989): 116-39. Cassandra pleading to figure of Apollo, Aeschylus *Agamemnon* 1080-82; Poe "The Altar": 135. On Dionysus sculptures upon theatrical altars, Poe "The Altar": 139. A *kratêr* is a large vase for diluting wine; a *kylix* is a wide drinking cup.

[7] On the general phenomenon in ancient Greece of one art form's commenting on another – drama on rhetoric, poetry on architecture – see James I. Porter, *The Origins of Aesthetic Thought in Ancient Greece: Matter, Sensation, and Experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 188. I argue in my review of Porter that he oddly omits tragedy's comments on statuary: *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 70 (2012): 323-326.

[8] Donald Mastronarde, "Iconography and Imagery in Euripides' *Ion*," *California Studies in Classical Antiquity* 8 (1975): 163-76; Vincent J. Rosivach, "Earthborns and Olympians: The Parodos of the *Ion*," *Classical Quarterly* 27 (1977): 284-94; Christian Wolff, "The Design and Myth in Euripides' *Ion*," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 69 (1965): 169-94.

[9] Euripides *Ion:* chorus commenting on engravings, 185-218; Heracles, 190-200; Bellerophon, 2014; gods versus giants, 205-18; *terpsei*, 231; Creusa's tears, 245-6. Rosivach argues that the images must have been visible to the play's audience. "Earthborns": 285n.1. Other readers, including Mastronarde, disagree; but even if the pieces are not present in the theater they are very much present to the tragedy's characters.

[10] Mastronarde "Iconography" and Rosivach "Earthborns" both show how the temple's images encapsulate the plot of the *Ion;* Rosivach in greater detail and more explicitly. On Creusa's serpentine aspects and her resistance to Apollo see Mastronarde "Iconography": 164, 168; Rosivach "Earthborns": 287, 288, 290.

[11] The role of Watts in the plot and thought of this film is played up in Christopher Orr, "Why *Her* Is the Best Film of the Year," *Atlantic* 12/20/2013 (https://www.google.com/amp/s/ amp.theatlantic.com/amp/ article/282544/), retrieved August 22, 2020.

[12] Adrienne Mayor, *Gods and Robots: Myths, Machines, and Ancient Dreams of Technology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018).

[13] *Gods and Robots,* pp. 20-51. Ancient sources for the Talos myth include Apollonius of Rhodes, *Argonautica* 4.1635-1688, Apollodorus *Library* 1.9.26. The pseudo-Platonic author of the dialogue *Minos* offers a Platonically cleaned-up version, 320c.

[14] The coldness of bronze, as the difference between statues and living humans, figures in a strange witticism ascribed to a Spartan, who mocked the philosopher Diogenes for standing with his arms around a statue. "Are you cold?" asks the Spartan. "No." "Well then, what's the big thing you are doing?" The discussion by E. K. Borthwick associates Diogenes' embrace with wrestling practice; for then the point of the question is, I take it, that it's no great thing to take on a cold opponent when one possesses the advantage of body heat, i.e. life. See Plutarch *Apophthegmata Laconica* 16 [*Moralia* 233a], and Borthwick, "The Cynic and the Statue," *The Classical Quarterly* 51.2 (2001): 494-498.

[15] Maurizio Bettini, *The Portrait of the Lover*, translated by Laura Gibbs (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999). Loving Aphrodite: Pliny *Natural History* 36.12; marble Eros, Arnobius *Against the Nations* 6.22; see Lucian *Amores* 15, *Imagines* 9; *Portrait* pp. 60-61. Tyranny in statue- love: *Portrait* p. 59. On incest see the tradition that makes Narcissus as a twin; Bettini (97-103) develops the link between image and sibling.

[16] Pygmalion is best known from Ovid *Metamorphoses* 10.243ff; on the older story see Clement *Protrepticus* 4.57.

[17] Ovid's version deserves a good word. Plato's metaphor of works as their makers' children has persisted despite large and small disanalogies. For one thing artists commonly lose interest in their older works and even disavow them. Disavowing older children when a new baby arrives is shameful; forgetting earlier loves in the excitement of a new romance is healthy. Ovid diagnoses the artist's mentality more accurately than Plato did.

[18] An obvious example is Richard Powers' novel *Galatea* 2.2 (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1995).

[19] In yet another cluster of myths, statues and figurines serve as conduits between worlds, whether channeling a god's powers or uniting a present human with another one far away or dead. On communication with divinities this way see Derek Collins, "Nature, Cause, and Agency in Greek Magic," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 133.1 (2003): 17-49; on reaching those now lost or dead, Christopher A. Faraone, "Binding and Burying: The Defensive Use of 'Voodoo Dolls' in Ancient Greece," *Classical Antiquity 10.2* (1991): 165–220. Jean-Pierre Vernant explored this general domain, e.g. "The Figuration of the Invisible and the Psychological Category of the Double: The Kolossos," in *Myth and Thought among the Greeks,* translated by Janet Lloyd and Jeff Fort (New York: Zone Books, 2006[1962]), pp. 321-332; it has been covered more recently by Deborah Tarn Steiner, *Images in Mind: Statues in Archaic and Classical Greek Literature and Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), Important as such stories are for understanding Greek statuary, they fail to fit narratives about artificial intelligence. Robots are not means to making contact with some non-robot far away. Here the love on both sides comes from mortal humans, and so these myths do not align with the stories of Theodore and Caleb. There is no shade of a human woman elsewhere that Theodore reaches through his personal assistant, nor a divinity to whom this artifact serves as conduit.

[20] Pandora in Hesiod: *Theogony* 507-616; *Works and Days* 53-105. Pandora as equivalent of robot, Mayor, *Robots and Gods*, pp. 204-207. Pandora is "built" and "not a product of nature": James A. Francis, "Metal Maidens, Achilles' Shield, and Pandora: The Beginnings of 'Ekphrasis,'" *American Journal of Philology* 130.1 (2009): 1-23, at 14. Also see Christopher Faraone, *Talismans and Trojan Horses: Guardian Statues in Ancient Greek Myth and Ritual* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 101-102.

[21] I should note that science fiction film saw the robotic possibilities in Pandora long before these contemporary examples. The duplicate of "Maria" in *Metropolis* (Fritz Lang, 1927) is a robot and also very much a Pandora.

[22] See for example *Theogony* 590, which asserts that the *genos* "type, species" of women descends from this first one made by the gods, and even "what is female" in general.

[23] Readings of *elpis*: Mayor, *Robots and Gods*, pp. 221-227; Mary Lefkowitz, *Greek Gods, Human Lives: What We Can Learn from Myths* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 233; William Hansen, *Ariadne's Thread: A Guide to International Tales Found in Classical Literature* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), p. 258. Hesiod *Works and Days*: hope is *keneên* "empty," 498; *ouk agathê* "not good," 500. See the problematic role of hope in Aeschylus *Prometheus Bound* 250-254. (If the play is not by Aeschylus, still it was written not long after his death.)

[24] On the cycle of hiding in Hesiod see Jean-Pierre Vernant, "The Myth of Prometheus in Hesiod," translated by Janet Lloyd, in *Myth and Society in Ancient Greece* (New York: Zone Books, 1980), pp. 183-202. Gods dining in Homer's Ethiopia: *Iliad* 1.424, *Odyssey* 1.24, 5.282.

[25] Xerxes and plane tree: Aelian *varia Historia* 9.39. Statue-love on Samos, man and meat: Athenaeus *Deipnosophistai* 13.605. See Bettini *Portrait* p. 62.

[26] This line of reasoning deserves a supporting remark. Quite aside from ancient statuary one might want to read Samantha as a god, and specifically as the god Athena. Theodore emulates the *polutropos* "maneuvering, versatile, even shape-shifting" Odysseus in his writing letters for other people as if he were those people – until at the end he writes to his ex-wife in his own voice (his "I am son of Laertes" moment). And in his odyssey Samantha behaves as Athena does in the old *Odyssey*, where she enters episodes surreptitiously for all the world resembling a human, before flying away abruptly even grandly. Some definite affection

even flirtation between Athena and Odysseus emerges in *Odyssey* 13, where she presents herself as a beautiful woman (289) and "stroked him with her hand" (288) – intimate language that Homer uses for mother and child but also (*Iliad* 6.484-483; *Odyssey* 5.180-181) between lovers. See Corinne Pache, *A Moment's Ornament: The Poetics of Nympholepsy in Ancient Greece* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 93-122. Finally, and despite whatever fondness she may feel, Athena leaves Odysseus, and is understood as leaving him for good.

[27] He is incredulous. "What are you talking about? That's insane. That's fucking insane."

[28] In his discussion Cavell develops but also reinterprets André Bazin's account of film's contact with a reality from which we are absent. The discussion dominates Cavell's *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film*, enlarged edition (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), especially pp. 23-27. I am indebted to the treatments of that book found in William Rothman and Marian Keane, "Toward a Reading of *The World Viewed*," *Journal of Film and Video* 49.1/2 (1997): 5-16; William Rothman, "Cavell on Film, Television, and Opera," in Richard Eldridge (ed.) *Stanley Cavell* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 206-238; and Noël Carroll "Revisiting *The World Viewed*," in David LaRocca (ed.) *The Thought of Stanley Cavell and Cinema: Turning Anew to the Ontology of Film a Half-Century after "The World Viewed"* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020), pp. 41-62.

[29] In *The World Viewed* and in subsequent writings about film, Cavell puts special weight on the ways in which the film's disclosure of an actor has come to carry particular meaning about the women in film. While these implications matter to my observations about Scarlett Johansson, I will not be assuming those claims or laying out the further argument that leads Cavell to them.

[30] This is Carroll's reading of *The World Viewed*. See "Revisiting," pp. 54-55. See Cavell, *The World Viewed,* pp. 23, 160.

[31] David Markson, *Wittgenstein's Mistress* (Champaign: Dalkey Archive, 1988) offers an inquiry, in fiction, into solipsism and the unloved or unloving state; see the discussion in David Foster Wallace, "The Empty Plenum: David Markson's *Wittgenstein's Mistress*," *Review of Contemporary Fiction* 10.3 (1990): 217-239.

[32] The line is quoted in several discussions of *Her*, including Brent Lambert, "Ghost in the Machine: The Powerful Questions of Love and the Nature of Reality in Spike Jonze's 'Her," at *FeelGuide* (https://www.feelguide.com/2013/12/29/ghost-in-the-machine-the-powerful-questions-of-love-the-nature-of-reality-in-spike-jonzes-her/), retrieved August 25, 2020.

[33] At greater length: "Never pretend to a love which you do not actually feel, for love is not ours to command. For the same reason, do not require love from your partner as a duty, for love given in this spirit doesn't ring true, and gives no pleasure to the other." Watts quotes himself offering this, along with other principles about love, to people embarking on marriage together: *In My Own Way: An Autobiography 1915 – 1965* (Novato, CA: New World Library, 1972), p. 189

[34] Aristotle: "Wouldn't it be absurd for [mind] to think about certain things? Clearly it thinks about what is most divine and most honorable," *Metaphysics* 12.9 1074b25-28; "Do we really wish the best for our friends, for instance that they should become gods? For then they will not be our friends," *Nicomachean Ethics* 8.7 1159a5-10.

[35] Watts, "What is Wrong with Our Culture," posted on YouTube https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oc0lKRgDZxA, retrieved August 28, 2020; quoted in Orr, "Why *Her* Is the Best Film of the Year."

From Big Shot to Parent: *Penny Serenade*'s Depiction of Moral Transformation

THOMAS E. WARTENBERG

Towards the end of George Stevens' 1941 melodrama, *Penny Serenade*, Roger Adams (Cary Grant), a small-town newspaper publisher, is faced with the possibility that he and his wife, Julie Gardiner (Irene Dunne), will not be able to adopt Trina (Baby Biffle), the one-year-old baby whom they foster parented during a year's probationary period. *The Rosalia Courier*, the paper Roger owns, has been forced to close because he can't pay the bills for newsprint. The resulting loss of income disqualifies them from becoming adoptive parents. At a hearing to decide whether to allow them to adopt Trina, the judge (Wallis Clark) tells Roger that he has no option but to deny their petition because the law requires that adoptive parents have sufficient financial resources to provide for their adopted children.

Despite the judge's claim that he has no option but to deny their petition, Roger pleads for mercy, claiming that since he and his wife are really fit parents, it would be an error to deny their petition. What's remarkable about Roger's speech, however, and what drew my attention to it, is his assertion that having been a father has dramatically changed him. In particular, he claims that the experience of caring for the young child has fundamentally altered his character.

> You don't know how badly my wife wanted a child. It wasn't so important to me. I-I don't know. I suppose most men are like this, but children never meant a great deal to me. Oh, I liked them all right, I suppose, but... What I'm trying to say, your honor, is the first time I saw her, she looked so little and helpless. I didn't know babies were so little. And then when she took ahold of my finger and held it, she just sort of walked into my heart and she's there to stay. I didn't know I could feel like that. I'd always been, well, kind of careless and irresponsible. I wanted to be a big shot. I couldn't work for anybody. I had to be my own boss. That sort of thing.... I'm not a big shot now. I'll do anything. I'll work for anybody. I'll beg. I'll borrow. I'll... Please judge....

The stark nature of Roger's comparison of his pre- and post-Trina approaches to life is quite remarkable. It's clear that he thinks his previous assumptions about living, which he characterizes as motivated by his desire to be a *big shot*, was morally deficient. At least from the perspective engendered by being young Trina's foster father, Roger sees himself as having been "careless and irresponsible." Falling in love with Trina has had a morally salutary effect on Roger, who now, he says, will do anything to be able to continue to parent Trina, though he stops short of saying he'll steal, only admitting to be willing to beg or borrow.

Penny Serenade is an exemplary cinematic presentation of the vicissitudes of moral life. Particularly noteworthy is the clarity with which the film depicts a man's moral transformation because of his experience foster parenting a baby. The focus on the change of a man's assumption about the appropriate ideal to strive for in living his life illustrates quite distinctly how a film's content can embody an important ethical experience had by one or more of its characters. Because that alteration in Roger's stance towards life is the result of caring for an adoptive child, the film breaks new ethical grounds.

Singing One's Life

Before turning to the film's presentation of a man's moral transformation, I want to consider a very interesting formal feature of *Penny Serenade*: its use of popular song as a narrative device.

Aside from the film's first and final sequences—which both feature the song that is heard repeatedly throughout the film, "You Were Meant for Me"—each of the film's sequences is introduced by means of a song. The songs all come from a boxed set of records that Applejack (Edgar Buchanan), a sort of guardian angel for the couple as well as the manager of Roger Adam's paper, discovers ironically bearing the label "The Story of a Happy Marriage" with the date of 1932, presumably the film's present. The label is ironic because we soon learn that Julie is preparing to leave Roger.

In each of these seven internal sequences of the film (i.e. the ones other than the two framing sequences that take place exclusively in the film's present of 1932), as Julie plays a record, a flashback emerges in which Julie relives a significant episode from the evolution of her relationship with Roger. The flashback is initiated by an iris out from a shot of the spinning record taken from directly above the turntable with the emerging scene from Julie's memory revealed by the expanding iris. We can label these seven sequences Meeting, Courtship and Marriage, Japan and its Aftermath, Finding Trina, Adopting Trina, Trina's Christmas, and Trina's Death.

Such a predominant use of flashbacks to tell a story is unusual in narrative film. In the same year that *Penny Serenade* was released, *Citizen Kane* employed a similar technique in its investigation of the meaning of "Rosebud," Charles Kane's last word. The difference is that *Penny Serenade* links the flashbacks to songs that Julie is listening to in the film's present, so that the songs are what trigger her memories and these memories are the flashbacks' content. Since there is no indication that Julie's memories are faulty, we take them to show us the actual course of her relationship with Roger.

The film's use of music, more specifically popular songs, is quite innovative and significant. Through this technique, the film highlights a link between our memories of our lives and the songs that we listened at the time. These memories are activated by the songs, which function as prompts to remembering. In this respect, the film is not unlike Proust's famous evocation of his childhood home in Combray in his masterpiece, *In Search of Lost Time*. Marcel's recollection is initiated by tasting a madeleine dipped in tea. In the film, it is music that provides the link to one's past, not the taste and smell of a delicious food. It suggests that music can be as evocative of the past as a pastry was for Marcel.

In its final sequence, *Penny Serenade* explicitly thematizes this understanding of the role of music in provoking memory. As Julie plays "You Were Meant for Me" on the phonograph once more, Applejack remarks, "These fool songs kind of take you back," establishing the film's self-consciousness about its presentation of popular songs as allowing our past to become present to us through memory. The idea is that the songs stimulate our memories so that the past wells up in us almost as if it were fully present, something that the film easily renders with its presentation of the past on the screen without any apparent mediation. The importance of these songs for Julie and Roger's relationship is narratively emphasized when, as she makes the final preparations for her departure, Julie says she can't actually divide up her and Roger's record collection as she has with their other possessions, for they all belong to both of them.

This use of a popular song is skillfully rendered in the film's first framing scene. As Applejack begins to play "You Were Meant for Me," Julie enters and tells him to take the record off. She explains that she is leaving Roger because "We don't need each other anymore. When that happens to two people, there's nothing left." She asks Applejack to get her a train ticket and then, giving us a hint of what has caused her to make this decision, she looks at what is clearly a nursery door and closes it, as if quite literally closing the door on her motherhood as well as her marriage. Later, we discover that Trina has died and that the devastation this has wrought on Roger in particular is responsible for Julie's decision to leave him. After flipping through the album of records whose sleeves are labeled with the important events in her and Roger's relationship, she puts on the record she had asked Applejack not to play. As the song begins again, it keeps repeating because of a scratch, causing Julie to move the needle. This initiates the complex iris shot that begins the film's Meeting Sequence in which we see Julie first meeting Roger.

The locale for this sequence is a record store, where the same song is playing on speakers both inside and outside of the store. The film emphasizes the identity of this song by having the record be broken in the same place because of the scratch. The identity of the place in the song where the scratch is establishes that it is the very same record we have been hearing in the opening frame, emphasizing its significance in the development of the couple's relationship. In a shot taken from the store's interior through its plate glass window, we see Roger listening to the song. He notices Julie and enters the store in order to meet her. Not put off by the attention of a different clerk, Roger eventually gets Julie to play a record for him in the private listening area that was common in stores at that time and he enters bearing a stack of records, indicating that he intends to spend a great deal of time with Julie.

Adoption as the Source of Moral Enlightenment

As I have said, the focus of *Penny Serenade*'s portrayal of moral experience is on Roger's transformation from big shot to father. By presenting an adoption as the cause of his moral evolution, the film breaks important new ground. Even today, adoption remains a somewhat taboo subject, especially in film, but it certainly was that in 1941. Prior to *Penny Serenade*, there were only a handful of films that involved adoption, though none of them treated it as a complex moral and social issue. *The Innocence of Lizette* (1916) is the story of a young woman who is adopted by a rich man and who subsequently wants to adopt a child she finds on her doorstep. Two early comedies feature adopted children, Charlie Chaplin's *The Kid* (1921) and *Small Talk* (1929), the first sound Our Gang comedy. *Rockabye* (1932) features a showgirl who loses her chance to adopt a baby because of her unsavory relations with a criminal and the subject of adoption is only introduced as a device to propel the film's main action. Finally, *Tarzan Finds a Son* (1939) show Tarzan and Jane "adopt" an infant who is the only survivor of a plane crash but the subject of adoption only becomes an issue when the boy's unscrupulous relatives arrive in Africa and attempt to take him from Tarzan, who is acknowledged as his father now.[1] *Penny Serenade* differs from these earlier cinematic depictions in providing a realistic representation of how adoption took place in American society at the time and highlighting the difficulties facing a couple attempting to become adoptive parents.[2] The film broaches the issue of adoption after Julie has lost her baby and is no longer able to have children, presumably because of a hysterectomy though the word is never mentioned in the film. Julie had joined Roger in Tokyo where he had gone to further his career. Throughout the Japan and its Aftermath Sequence, tensions between Roger and Julie arise from Roger's somewhat profligate spending habits, the result of what Roger later characterizes as his carelessness and irresponsibility. This becomes clear through Roger's response to Julie's telling him that she is pregnant. He immediately begins to plan a trip around the world, whereas she is concerned that they protect their nest egg so that they have sufficient means to provide for their child. Their differing approaches to parenthood result in a great deal of tension between them and are unresolved when an earthquake suddenly strikes, causing Julie to miscarry. In the hospital in San Francisco to which she is taken to recover, she learns that she can't have children.

So, the only way for Roger and Julie to become parents is to adopt a child. But even though each of them desires to do so, they are unable to broach the subject with the other. This is an indication of how sensitive a topic adoption was in the US in the late 1930's, for there was such a taboo around the topic of adoption that neither Roger nor Julie are able to raise the subject despite their evident mutual desire to become adoptive parents.

As usual, Applegate provides the necessary mediation between the two partners in the Finding Trina Sequence. We see him raise the issue with Julie when he comes across her in the nursery in their apartment in Rosalia where they have gone so that Roger can finally be his own boss and run *The Courier Press*, thereby assuming his desired role of big shot. Although Julie is enthusiastic

about adopting a child, she is reluctant to raise the issue with Roger until Applejack tells her that Roger feels the same way she does, although he gets her to promise she won't reveal what he told her about Roger. When Roger comes upstairs from the press, Julie disregards her promise to Applejack and immediately broaches the subject of adoption, and she and Roger decide to do so without any hesitation.

The film goes on to portray the vicissitudes of the adoption process, albeit without pressing the issue with any stridency. What's striking, nonetheless, is the humiliation the couple has to endure in order to adopt a child. (At the time, only heterosexual couples were considered appropriate adopters and this is never questioned by the film in any way.) Even though the decision to adopt a child is a deeply personal one, the state believes it should have the power to make sure that those who adopt a child are both willing and able to do so. For this reason, prospective adopters have to undergo a series of tests and inspections from an adoption agency in order to be allowed to adopt a child, and it is these that the film shows resulting in the humiliation of the prospective parents.

Because the agency overseeing the adoption legally has to certify that the couple has the ability and means to care for a child, it is required to inspect various quite private aspects of a couple's life. Even when the person doing the certification is sympathetic and humane, as Miss Oliver (Beulah Bondi) is in the film—though she initially appears rigid and judgmental, perhaps reflecting Julie and Roger's view of her, she is later shown to be kind and considerate, even going out of her way to allow Roger and Julie to have a child more quickly than the norm—she still must subject the couple to various humiliating experiences before she can allow them to adopt.

When Roger and Julie first appear before Miss Oliver in order to request an adoption, the central conflict in their marriage has already been portrayed: Roger's rash behavior as a big shot clashes with Julie's more mature and cautious attitude towards life and parenting. This conflict manifests itself in two ways. First, Roger says that they want to adopt a boy and Julie that she doesn't care about the child's gender. The film will use Roger's preference for a boy to indicate how being a caretaker will change him, but initially it just shows that Roger has a masculinist bias that favors a boy baby. Despite this disagreement, the two of them share a stereotypical, racist picture of what the child they adopt should look like, for they share a desire for "a two-year old with blonde curly hair and a dimple." That the baby has to be Caucasian goes without saying.

The real tension between the two of them is indicated by Roger's response to a question about their income. Roger tells Miss Oliver that he makes about $100 a week, a clear exaggeration by this struggling newspaper publisher. Later, Julie asks him, "Why do you have to be a big shot," introducing the term for Roger's mode of conduct that he will come to accept as an accurate characterization of his morally flawed approach to life. Here, it's clear that Roger has lied because he thinks there is no way for the adoption agency to discover his true income and he believes that exaggerating his wealth will make it more likely that they will be able to adopt a child, for the agency will be impressed that such a "big shot" wants to adopt a child.

Timing is the next vicissitude the young couple has to endure. Although they want to bring a child home immediately, that's not how things go in the adoption business. There is a line of people waiting to adopt children, they learn, and, in any case, they have to be approved. As part of that process, they have to endure a surprise visit from Miss Oliver who will see if they have suitable accommodations for raising a young child.

This visit clearly shames Julie. It occurs while she and Roger are in the midst of cleaning house, making it difficult for anyone to traverse the apartment. Julie is actually doing the Charleston—another indication of the importance of music to the young couple—when Miss Oliver arrives. But the visit goes well and Miss Oliver is particularly impressed by the lovely nursery they have for the child they plan to adopt. At the end of her visit, Miss Oliver surprises them by telling them they she has a five-week old girl that they can adopt because she thinks that they will be the

perfect couple for the girl. "She's like no other child," she tells them, using words that parents often say about their own children.

The age and gender of the child are two factors that continue to present problems, especially for Roger, and at first he doesn't agree to taking the baby. When they subsequently visit the agency and see her, Julie is transfixed, though Roger still is somewhat reluctant because he retains his desire to adopt a boy. He is won over by Trina when she grabs his finger, and the couple leaves the agency with her, even though they are not prepared for the speed with which they have wound up with an infant to care for.

The following sequence in which they bring Trina home and begin caring for her is the most humorous one in the film, though it also has a serious undercurrent, for it begins the film's presentation of parenting as a source for the transformation of Roger's assumptions about how to conduct his life. Both he and Julie are equally unprepared to take care of a five-week old child and the antics they resort to in response to the challenges of doing so are quite amusing. In fact, once again it is Applejack's intervention that saves the day when he gives Trina a bath, for the couple are quite inept at this as well as other simple tasks of caring for a baby. Although the agency has pursued due diligence about the couple's home and financial situation before allowing the couple to become Trina's caretakers, they are less assiduous in making sure that the couple is actually ready to undertake the caretaking necessary for raising an infant. So, the film humorously depicts the nervous parents as they make all sorts of noise in the attempt to be quiet lest they wake the sleeping baby. And, as we know to expect in such scenes, Trina doesn't wake up because of any of these various noisy events, but does eventually wake up when all is quiet—and screams loudly.

Towards the end of the Finding Trina Sequence, an important event occurs, although its significance is not clear at the time. Julie has no clue what to do to quiet the screaming infant whom she picks up. Roger stands around offering his advice and urging Julie on. Frustrated by her inability to quieten her daughter—Julie is shown to have no "maternal instinct" despite her desire to be a mother—and by Roger's well-intentioned hectoring, she simply thrusts Trina into his arms. Not knowing exactly what he is doing, Roger rocks the baby back and forth, accidentally putting it to sleep. In evident pride at his "accomplishment," he tells Julie, "Just wanted her Daddy."

This humorous and seemingly inconsequential scene actually depicts Roger beginning to discover the satisfactions of being a parent (as well as its anxieties). Even a "simple task" like getting a baby to sleep is fraught with difficulties and can be successfully accomplished only if one is patiently attuned to the child. Julie's worries about her ability to parent make it impossible for her to easily succeed at it. But Roger finds that he is able to meet the challenge of fathering because his love for his daughter allows him to attend to her needs and to do what is required, even if his efforts succeed only through good luck that he has trouble acknowledging. This gives rise to a real sense of accomplishment on his part for being able to be a good father to his young daughter. This is significant because Roger has, for the first time, identified himself as a father and takes pride in his role as one. This indicates an important potential transformation in his identity that his ongoing fathering of Trina will actually cement.

Penny Serenade's depiction of the process of adoption, then, is remarkable, especially for the time. Although the film does not make a pointed critique of society's regulation of adoption, it does show that an already difficult decision is made even more challenging by the structure society imposes upon it. This is because the very private decision to become parents of someone else's child is made into a humiliating public process through the state's decision to ensure that prospective adopters have the appropriate qualifications.

Of course, the humiliations the couple has to endure to become caretakers of a young child are just one side of the film's presentation of adoption. Even more significant is its depiction of the ethical transformation that being an adoptive parent brings in its wake, a process the film has just begun to document.

Transformations in the Moral Life

Both of the *Penny Serenade*'s protagonists undergo transformations in the things that they most value. These alterations in the characters' approaches to life, what things they most value, that constitutes the film's central expression of its sense of what is at stake in living a moral life.

Julie's transformation is less complex, treated more quickly, and does not stem from being a parent but rather her discovery that she won't be able to have a biological child. In the hospital after the earthquake caused her miscarriage but before the two have decided to adopt, Julie has undergone an experience that has significant consequences for her understanding of what is important in life. As Roger tries to convince her to move to Rosalia so that he can realize his dream of owning a small-town newspaper, Julie remains distraught at not being able to have a child. The film registers this fact by showing her attention to be focused on even a hint of a child she sees from her hospital bed. Sitting at the foot of her bed, Roger makes the case to move: "If I make a go of the paper, I'll be able to get you anything you want. I'll be able to get you furniture, a car, clothes, everything." To which Julie responds, "You know, it's strange, Roger, but I can't seem to get myself to care about those things now. They don't seem important any more. The one thing I really wanted, I'm never going to have."

Julie's statement sheds retrospective light upon why Roger appealed to her as well as illuminating how the loss of her ability to have a child impacts on her sense of what's important in life, the fundamental ethical issue explored by *Penny Serenade*. Initially, it was Roger's ability to make the grand gesture that made him attractive to her. We first witnessed this tendency in the Meeting Sequence I've already discussed briefly. That scene began with a shot from within the record store where Julie worked that showed Roger walking by as "You Were Meant for Me" was heard playing on the store's record player, repeat and all. Attracted to Julie, Roger engages in various subterfuges in order to get to meet her and spend time with her. Perhaps the most outrageous is his buying 27 records from her even though he does not own a record player, a fact he discloses as he asks her if she can play a record for him at her home. We clearly see that Roger is capable of impulsively grand gestures and that this is the source of his charm, a charm that is reinforced by his being played by Cary Grant and the persona that he created in Hollywood films. Throughout their courtship and the early stages of their relationship, Roger maintains this manner of acting by ignoring practicalities and making grand gestures.

Although Julie enjoyed Roger's impulsiveness when they were dating, as she becomes pregnant, Roger's extravagance and failure to think cautiously about money become more worrying to her. She is troubled by his renting an expensive house for them in Japan that required him to take out loans and, later, his deciding to take a trip around the world rather than plan carefully for the child they expect. The seeds are being sown for the critical assessment of Roger's character that we see in the film and that Roger himself eventually comes to acknowledge.

But it's really the experience of losing a baby and having a hysterectomy that propel Julie's transformation. Instead of wanting the extravagant things Roger buys for her, Julie no longer cares about them. Her desires have changed, as she realizes that there is or was only one thing that she wanted, and that was to have a child. She no longer falls under the spell of her big shot husband, wishing that he would become more responsible, less impulsive, be the sort of person fit for parenting.

Already in its depiction of Julie's transformation, *Penny Serenade* indicates the seriousness with which it takes the question of what truly matters in life. It shows how a significant experience—here, the loss of the ability to have a child—can transform a person's sense of what is really worthwhile, valuable, important. In so doing, the film shows how our experience has an important ethical dimension, for deciding or recognizing what really matters is one of the fundamental ethical tasks for human beings and the film has begun to show how one's experiences have this ethical dimension to them.

From Big Shot to Parent

Penny Serenade's claim to be an examination of the moral life rests squarely, though, on its depiction of Roger Adam's transformation from big shot to parent, exactly the transformation that Julie hoped for and that embodies the film's evaluation of Roger's moral development. Part of the reason for this is that the film also embodies a critique of other 1930's films' celebration of the masculinity embodied by the big shot and, more specifically, in the celebration of the persona of Cary Grant.

To see this, we need to consider the film's presentation of the moral world of the big shot in more detail. What I have emphasized so far is the impulsiveness characteristic of Roger that was initially attractive to Julie but later became a source of concern for her. To round out the film's characterization of the big shot's view of life, we need to look more closely at the big shot's valuation of work and its relation to his family life.

The film's Courtship and Marriage Sequence establishes that the world of a big-shot involves a privileging of work over family life. The relevant scene takes place on New Year's Eve. Roger is late for a party Julie is throwing, so that the issue of the wisdom of her loving a newspaper reporter emerges. The most trenchant concern is voiced by Applejack. "I hate to see a nice girl like you get mixed up with a newspaperman," he tells her. He is worried that Julie won't find true happiness if she is married to a man whose first "wife" is his newspaper. Because the paper always comes first for someone like Roger, Julie's happiness will always take a backseat to the demands of Roger's work. Only when Julie dissimulates by telling Applejack that she "never thought about getting married"—shortly before accepting Roger's unexpected marriage proposal—that Applejack is satisfied that her involvement with Roger is not a mistake. As we witness the course of their relationship, we realize that Applejack's concern was completely justified.

The film here uses the figure of the newspaperman as a shorthand way of encapsulating the problematic world of the big shot. In so doing, the film adopts a staple of 30's films, for many films made at that time featured reporters who were represented as occupying a masculine world of work from which women were generally excluded. They work long hours and are hard-drinking, rough-talking guys whose lives revolve around their work. In these films, their approach to life is valorized as an appropriate way to conduct oneself.

One example of such a film is Howard Hawkes' delightful comedy, *His Girl Friday*. Made the year before *Penny Serenade*, it also stars Cary Grant, who again plays the publisher of a newspaper, Walter Burns. But this time his goal is to keep his ex-wife Hildy (Rosalind Russell) from the mistake of marrying an insurance salesman and moving upstate to have babies. The film presents the drama and excitement of the masculine work-world of the reporter as a better life than the dreariness with which it characterizes the domestic life to which Hildy aspires and that her prospective husband, Bruce Baldwin (Ralph Bellamy), embodies in his character. The film thereby endorses the very value scheme that *Penny Serenade* will criticize.

Interestingly, Stanley Cavell discusses *His Girl Friday* as one of the remarriage comedies of the 1930's. Cavell was one of the first philosophers of film to focus on the ways in which films depict their characters' ethical experience and he takes that to be the central mark of their philosophical significance. He uses the term "moral perfectionism" to characterize the way in which films like *His Girl Friday* portray the transformations that characters undergo from living socially sanctioned lives to embracing a life lived in accordance with their own ideals, goals, and aspirations. Unfortunately, he also endorses such films' depiction of women as needing the agency of men in order to attain a more adequate stance towards life.[3] Just as *Penny Serenade* contests *His Girl Friday* on just this ground, I also reject Cavell's endorsement of this sexist trope. Like *Penny Serenade*, I believe that men can benefit from moral transformations at least as much as women.

Initially, though, *Penny Serenade* depicts Roger as just as dominated by masculinist norms as Walter Burns. This comes out clearly in the next scene from the New Year's Eve party. Julie is surprised when Roger does eventually arrive, but the news he has for her is bittersweet: He has

been offered the sort of post he has dreamed of, one that will allow him, he tells her, to be "more or less my own boss," thereby moving him closer to the hoped-for world of a big shot. The catch is that he has to go to Tokyo. While Roger is clearly determined to pursue this opportunity, he doesn't want it to cost him his relationship with Julie. He makes her the following offer that reeks of his impulsiveness: That they get married that very evening; that he leave for Tokyo to take his post; but that she come and join him in three months, once he has gotten things set-up for her and has established himself in his job.

I take this scene to present the most important characteristic of the masculinist world of a big shot: prioritizing of the demands of the work-world above those of family life. This ranking is illustrated by Roger's deciding that his romance with Julie will have to take a backseat to the demands of his career. Although he tries to find a way to reconcile the demands of his two worlds, the reconciliation requires Julie's willingness to subordinate her desires to his, to allow Roger's career to set the terms on which their relationship can be conducted. After all, a big shot cannot work for someone else, for to do so is to take orders, something that a big shot won't abide. Being one's own boss allows one to have greater control over one's work-life, but it also entails a vulnerability that the film will soon portray.

An immediate question is why a man would place the requirements of his work, his job, over the interests of his personal life. After all, we usually think of our personal life as the arena in which we get to do those things that we truly value. But this is not how life appears to a big shot—actual or only potential—for work plays an important role in the constitution of such a man's identity. A man like Roger, an aspiring big shot, takes his work as more than simply a source of income. For him, success in his work is central to establishing the masculine identity of a big shot that is his goal. Thus, we can even see why Roger's need to see himself as a big shot explains his willingness to give his work priority over his relationship with Julie: If he does not succeed in becoming a big shot, he doesn't feel that he will be a worthy partner for her. Roger's work-world affects his personal life because his feelings of self-worth (or lack thereof) stem primarily from his success in the former.

The Japan and its Aftermath Sequence that takes place three months later as Julie arrives in Tokyo connects the two aspects of Roger's character: his aspiration to be a big shot and his impulsiveness. When Julie tells him that she is pregnant, Roger unilaterally quits his job and uses the small inheritance he has just received to buy expensive tickets for an around the world trip. He dismisses Julie's worries about what they'll do when they arrive back in the States, for he has confidence that he'll be able to find a small-town newspaper to run, thereby realizing his dream of being his own boss and firmly establishing him as a big shot.

Here, we see that the flip side of the big shot's need to be his own boss is the impulsiveness of his actions. The bold man of action like Roger need not share the concerns of a person like Julie who appears to be more timid and less self-assured. From this perspective, women are seen as too concerned with domestic issues, too worried that things won't work out. The exaggerated self-assurance of the big shot allows him to act boldly, in Nietzschean fashion, counting on things working out.

We have now seen how *Penny Serenade* sets up the ethical demand that Roger come to acknowledge the flaws in his character. If he is to be a suitable husband to Julie as well as an acceptable father to a child, Roger will have to reject the values for which he has lived: being a big shot whose attractiveness depends upon his impulsivity. In contrast to *His Girl Friday*, which valorizes those very features of the childless Walter Burns' character, *Penny Serenade* shows that being a parent has a transformative effect on Roger that entails a rejection of his previous values.

Penny Serenade includes a shorthand version of Roger's transformation in the following way: We saw that when Roger and Julie discuss adopting a child, he is adamant that he'll only be happy if they adopt a boy. When we see him playing with his adoptive daughter Trina six years later, however, he responds to Julie's teasing question about his preference for a boy by denying

it: "You wanted a boy," he asserts. "I didn't want a boy." This bit of self-delusion highlights the change that has occurred in Roger: As the adopted father of this baby girl, he unselfconsciously denies his previous self and its preferences.

But what about being a father to a baby girl has changed Roger's sense of himself? In the speech I quoted to begin this chapter, Roger attributes his alteration to the depth of his feelings for his adoptive daughter. As he tells the judge, the intensity of the feelings he has for Trina are something for which he was not prepared. They are so strong that they have changed him, made him into a human being with fundamentally different values than those he previously had. He now criticizes his own obsession with being a big shot, stressing less his failure to have achieved that goal than his realization that the aspiration to be one was misguided. Because he loves his daughter so intensely, what really matters to him is being a good father to her, doing all that is necessary for that to happen, regardless of what sort of work he might have to take on in order to do so. He has become a responsible member of his family, shedding the unreliability inherent in his former big shot persona.

Now it certainly is true that an important component to being a parent, part of what make all the work of parenting worthwhile, is the depth and steadiness of feelings of love that one experiences through one's love for one's child. Roger claims, and this resonates with my own experience, there is no other human relationship that has this quality. While the child is young, their helplessness and their vulnerability make it possible to have a loving experience that is not mixed with the sorts of ambiguities and ambivalences that characterize most of our other mature loving relationships. It is this deep love that takes Roger by surprise and that produces his new, more mature self.

This is itself an important ethical experience that forms part of the moral center of this film: that taking caring of a vulnerable human being, a child, can be a source of such profound feelings of love for another human being. These feelings create a sense of responsibility for that person's happiness that is totally foreign to a big shot's world (except as the province of a woman such as Julie). Even more remarkable is the fact that the object of Roger's love is not his biological child. *Penny Serenade* rejects the notion that a parent's feeling of love for their child requires that child to be their biological progeny, thereby valorizing adoption as a fully legitimate form of parenting.

There is more to Roger's transformation, however, than the fact that he now accepts responsibilities he once scorned, for he also has acquired a different understanding of the importance of work in his life. Whereas earlier Roger had placed work before his relationship with Julie—at one point she quips "The newspaper always comes first around here" when her request that the bathtub be fixed had to take a back seat to a repair of the press' linotype machine—he now clearly sees his work as having value only in so far as it provides for his family's well-being.

That work has only an instrumental value in a father's world marks an important distinction of that world from the big shot's world we explored earlier, and it results from the demands of being a responsible parent. In the big shot's world, work was a way for a man to construct his identity. The goal was to see oneself as someone who was better than others because he didn't have to listen to the demands of a boss. This is why, for example, Roger wanted to work for himself: If he could work when *he* chose and do what *he* thought was important, then he could think of himself as better than the myriad others who were slaves to the demands of their bosses. This also explains Roger's desire to be a newspaper publisher in a small town, for this work setting allows him to be in charge of all the processes of production and thus to see himself as the big shot he aspires to be.

I use the phrase, "a father's world," to contrast the basic attitudes and interpretations that govern Roger's experience as a result of having adopted Trina. It is not meant to essentialize fathers' experience of the world, for there certainly are myriad fathers who do not occupy what I characterize as a father's world. Rather, it is my way of conceptualizing the film's presentation of Roger as undergoing a fundamental moral transformation through the experience of being Trina's father, emphasizing that he now accepts a different set of moral values than he used to.

In this sense, then, we can say that a father's identity has very different sources and very different characteristics than a big shot's. At the most obvious level, a father's identity comes not from his relationship to his work, but from his relationship to his child(ren) and partner, so that the realm of life that provides its meaning is reversed. Instead of seeking to succeed at work so that he can maintain an identity as better than others, a father like Roger works primarily to make it possible for his family to live. His sense of accomplishment comes less from his success in the work-world than from his parenting, his success at raising a child. The sense of self that emerges from this activity, even if highly successful, is radically different from that of a big shot, for a good father does not feel good because he sees himself as superior to others but because of the pleasure he receives from parenting and the knowledge that he is doing it well.

Thus, at a first level, *Penny Serenade* criticizes the form of masculinity that a film like *His Girl Friday* celebrates: making one's work, one's career, more important, more central to one's life, than one's personal relations, one's family. The threat of losing Trina because of his lack of income forces Roger to articulate the inversion of values that has resulted from him being a father, to see that he values being a father above succeeding at his work. Indeed, his sense of accomplishment for being a good father can even provide solace for his inability to achieve the level of success as a publisher that he had hoped to achieve.

It is in this sense that *Penny Serenade* functions as a response to *His Girl Friday*. In that film, Hildy, a female newspaperman, so to speak, comes to realize that she really belongs in the newspaper business rather than the domestic world of the home. In that film's terms, this is because the work-world of the paper represents an exciting adventure that Hildy enjoys being on with her ex-husband, Walter, the newspaper's publisher. From that point of view, raising kids seems inexorably dull, an option only chosen because of the impact of a residual sense of the feminine.

Penny Serenade criticizes this perspective as masculinist. Only a man who is ignorant of the nature of a father's world could so easily dismiss it as having little, if anything, to offer. By showing Roger Adam's transformation from aspiring big shot to satisfied father, *Penny Serenade* asks that we see parenting as a source of deep joy that can profoundly change a man's world.

From this point of view, *Penny Serenade* asks us to look more deeply at a man's experience than many narrative films. Although it is often claimed—unjustifiably in my view—that all films are told from a male point of view, there are clear limits to the types of masculinity such films usually hold out as admirable. (Generally, it is comedies that portray "weak" men as superior to "strong" ones.) *Penny Serenade* is unique in its presentation of a man's realization that the norm of masculinity that he had accepted in his life—that of being a big shot—is inadequate and that an alternative, less socially valorized norm of masculinity—that of being a father—is more adequate as an expression of his life and experiences.

A Parent's Vulnerability

Once Roger has secured the adoption of Trina, it might seem perverse for *Penny Serenade* to take her from him and his wife. Nonetheless, this is exactly what the film does. The Trina's Death Sequence, the film's final flashback initiated by a spinning record, begins with Miss Olive (Beulah Bondi) reading a letter from Julie that explains that Trina suddenly fell ill and died. Trina's death is such a blow to Roger in particular, that he is unable to bear anything that reminds him of her, be it his home or, even, his wife. It is Roger's withdrawal from this world that threatens his marriage and explains Julie's decision to leave him.

Despite the somewhat contrived nature of this element in *Penny Serenade*'s plot, it makes an important point.[4] So far, the film has presented the world of a father as superior to the world of a big shot in virtue of the emotional connections that a father has towards his child(ren). The film now undertakes the presentation of one of the dangers of inhabiting such a world: it makes one's happiness dependent upon the well-being of others.

The idea that men (or, at least, men subject to masculinist assumptions) are uncomfortable with the idea that they and their happiness are dependent upon others is one that I have explored in my work on the unlikely couple film (Wartenberg, 1999). In films like *Pygmalion* and *It Happened One Night*, we are introduced to male characters who have difficulty in accepting the equality of their partners lest it force them to acknowledge their own dependence on them. (This is a theme also explored by Stanley Cavell in *Cities of Words* and other writings.)

Penny Serenade asks us to extend our awareness of the anxieties of our finitude to our relationships to our children. Because a father's life can be so fundamentally enriched and altered by the love he feels for his child, his own happiness depends on the well-being of that child. While this is the source of Roger's realization that his job is no longer important to him as a source of his own self-image, but merely as the means by which he can (try to) ensure the well-being of his daughter, his sense of self suffers another diminution because he is unable to prevent bad things—death, in this case—from befalling her.

There is thus a two-fold threat to the self that the film depicts as the result of identifying oneself as a father. First, one has to accept the idea that one's job will not be the central aspect of one's life, but rather the means for taking care of the attachments that are central to being a father. Second comes the realization that, no matter what one tries to do, no matter how hard one works, he cannot fully control what might befall the child(ren) one loves. This double displacement of a job from the center of a man's life is the ethical significance of *Penny Serenade*'s story.

The film's upbeat ending, one that achieves narrative closure by giving Roger the son he initially wanted, tries to mitigate the impact of its narrative. Nonetheless, the film demonstrates that being a father, while potentially a source of great richness in a man's life, makes a man vulnerable to the well-being of his child(ren). *Penny Serenade* asks us to understand that, despite the risks, being a parent, adoptive or not, is an important experience for men, one that can have beneficial effects on their assumptions about what matters in life.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have explored the moral experience presented by a narrative film. We have seen how *Penny Serenade* endows various aspects of its characters' lives with deep moral significance. Initially, I explored the film's innovative depiction of adoption, arguing that the film illuminated some morally problematic ways in which parents were humiliated through the intervention of public agencies into their private lives.

But I have also emphasized that the narrative trajectory of the film shows us how what its two central characters take to be valuable in life undergoes a transformation in the course of their experience. This transformation—portrayed in much greater detail in the case of Roger than Julie—involves a reassessment of their lives and what matters in them. *Penny Serenade* shows that the experience of human beings has an important ethical dimension to it, and it endorses a form of masculinity that other Hollywood films reject. By presenting the outcome of a difficult educative process as a man's acceptance of his identity as a parent as his primary one, *Penny Serenade* embraces the notion that a morally superior life can be the outcome of an ethically charged experience such as that of becoming a parent.

Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley, Massachusetts, USA

Notes

[1] According to Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Films_about_adoption. In the Tarzan film, the main issue is whether Boy will be taken from Tarzan by his unscrupulous relatives. The film does present Boy as Tarzan's son despite his not being biologically related to him.

[2] Irene Dunne adopted a daughter, Mary Frances, in 1938. It is interesting to speculate on whether that had any effect on the film focusing on adoption.

[3] Stanley Cavell, *Cities of Words: Pedagogical Letters on a Register of the Moral Life* (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press: 2004.

[4] The sequence of scenes leading up to Trina's death is the weakest part of the film, especially the Christmas pageant. Aside from some clumsy foreshadowing, the scenes suffer from sentimentality. I have therefore skipped over them as much as possible.

Guy Debord's Ex-centric Cinema: The Concept of Time and the Voice-Over Narration in his Films

IOANNIS PARASKEVOPOULOS

Abstract: Guy Debord's thought is invariably associated with a certain experience and critique of time. I am attempting to trace the concept of time in his cinematographic legacy and in the creation of his private mythology. In following Janet Harbord's notion of ex-centric cinema which defines a project of potentiality in the realm of experience, I am focusing on this particular kind of cinema that escapes the established forms and the non-lived. My aim is to trace through the method of film archaelogy, the fragments of temporality, and to bring to the surface the concept of time and its manifestation in variable forms in Debord's cinematographic language. Thus, I am exploring the potentiality of the virtual in his cinema.

  In order to trace the experience of the concept of time in Debord's cinema, I am discussing the discursive formation in two of his films: *Critique of Separation* (1961) and *On The Passage of a Few Persons Through a Rather Unity of Time* (1959). Whilst being composed of a variety of documentary footage, of shots of the urban landscape and of tracking shots of photographs, the films are a record of an invisible history that takes place within the city. The diegesis of the film is being formed by the narrator that argues about a micro-society that created a network of interactions within the urban landscape. I am focusing on the voice-over of Debord and particularly on his rhetoric. I am discussing how his language functions in relation to the images thus constructing a montage-palimpsest.

Keywords: Ex-centric Cinema, film archaeology, Guy Debord, time, spectacle

Introduction: Reconstructing the Invisible

In this essay, I am attempting an analysis of the concept of time in Guy Debord's two films *On the Passage of a Few Persons Through a Rather Brief Unity of Time* (*Sur le passage de quelques personnes à travers une assez courte unité de temps*, France, 1959) and on *Critique of Separation* (*Critique de la Séparation*, France, 1961). The two films constitute the second and third part of his trilogy *Against Cinema* (*Contre le Cinéma*), with the first one being the film *Howlings in favour of Sade* (*Hurlement en faveur de Sade*, France, 1952). I am analyzing the development of the concept of time and the filmic construction of the two films. My main problematic focuses on the construction of the filmmaker's cinematographic language and with its correlation to his philosophical thought. One of the elements of the narration that I am focusing on is the relation of sound, and more specifically of speech, with montage. Finally, I am discussing how Debord's rhetorics affect the overall construction of the cinematographic event.

  In Debord's cinema, there is no clear distinction between what is public and what is private. That is due to the fact that his films are a comment on his temporality (meaning the public sphere of his times and its conception of time) and at the same time a panegyric of his private life. We are coming across a figure who identifies himself with History and who has lived his life trying to overcome the strict limits of his temporality. Debord's language reveals elements and traces of a life that is non-representable and at the same time, it conceals them. This distinction between the private and the public has to do with the formation of a concept of time, which accordingly

forms a different form of life than that which is represented in mainstream cinema. As we shall discuss later on, this thesis is clearly underlined by the use of montage in his work.

The two films discussed here, are concerned with his bohemian life in Paris of the 1950's. *On the Passage* and *Critique of Separation* are comments on his temporality, on the passing of time and of the loss of youth. They are composed of newsreel footage, shots of Debord and of his friends, photographs and documents. The filmic construction of this composition is strongly accompanied by the voice-over narration, and the voice that we hear is mostly that of the filmmaker.

On the Passage of a Few Persons Through a Rather Brief Unity of Time takes place in 1952 in Paris, as we are being informed by a subtitle in the beginning of the film. The past tense is used by the narrator in order to describe the events during this period. The images of the film are a combination of the newsreel images and of shots and photographs of Debord's milieu. *Critique of Separation* takes place in 1961 again in Paris. It starts with a shot of a group in a café and with the voice-over narrator contemplating on the nature of documentary film. Again, Debord follows the technique of collage of different images. The film is a monologue on the means of action that the group should follow, without having a conclusion as the filmmaker mentions at the end.

Ex-centric Cinema and the Method of Film Archaeology: Guy Debord's Thought under a New Perspective

I am using Janet Harbord's notion of ex-centric cinema in order to define and localize in a precise way the subject of my investigation. First of all, the concept ex-centric means something that escapes or that it differentiates itself form the normative. Secondly, with ex meaning out of and with the word center implying the normative cinema, Harbord refers to a different conception of cinema. Ex-centric cinema establishes in its core the project of a potentiality of the virtual, which has image as its basis but by clearly transcending it, it moves to the realm of experience beyond cinema.

Ex-centric cinema is concerned with the concept of life, the representation of life through the image and its relation with the unlived. Harbord mentions, that "in every living moment there are potential experiences that are unlived, possible iterations of a life that exists in a space around the life that we lead" (Harbord 2). The "living moment" is defined by the unlimited possibilities that exist in the realm of the real, in the actual realization of the choices that are made and on the method that is being followed.

The project of ex-centric cinema moves beyond the point of classification of the archive. As a project it escapes a possible classification, since it is situated outside the archive and without being delimited to a center. Thus, this project is a constant process of research on the potentialities of the possibilities of the real. Concerning the result of this research, Harbord argues that "what we discover is untold possibilities for a cinema not yet born, the location of which is hard to determine in spatial terms" (Harbord 3).

The potentialities of cinema are clearly expressed by Guy Debord in his film *In Girum imus nocte et consumimur igni* (France, 1978). Debord mentions that "it is a society and not a technique that has made cinema what it is today. [Cinema] It could have been a historical treatise, a theory, an essay or a mémoire. It could be the film that I am creating write now" (Debord 1348-1349). More specifically, in his last film he refers to what we call mainstream cinema as a system that propagates control, propaganda, pseudo-amusement and pseudo-critique (Debord 1335). Debord's work is a total critique of the existing forms of life, of the contemporary organization of bios and of the representation of those two. His aphoristic claim is thus expressed as follows: "The existing images show the existing lies" (Debord 1348). Debord's cinematographic work then, is a polemic against the contemporary representations of life, and that allows me to refer to his work as anti-cinematic in the strict sense of the term. By the term anti-cinema I am referring to Debord's

negation of the cinematic practices and themes of his contemporaries as well as to his neglect of the spectators. Debord considers cynical the relationship between filmmakers and spectators, since, according to the filmmaker, the first are manipulators and the second totally deprived of liberty (Debord 1334). Hence, what we are coming across here, can be summed up to Harbord's following axiom, concerning an "unlived history of cinema", that refers to "a cinema that is not visible until its negative form is cast as a set of objects, networks, practices and iterations" (Harbord 1). Thus, this kind of cinema manages to escape the strict limits of organization of both, the everyday life, and that of the cinematic representation of life. Debord's cinema is a negation of cinema, since it is at the same time a negation of the current organization of life and of its time. That is according to Harbord "a cinema that resides not only in the margins and ephemera of cinema, but in the direct light of the everyday as a negative form, as space yet uncast" (2016:1). The filmmaker uses the established means of cinema in order to negate it and to transcend it.

Such an attempt escapes the established aprioris of the normative and focuses upon the construction of a form-of-life that is not visible nor identifiable. By appropriating images as tools, Debordian cinema transcends the representation of life as has been defined by the image. Thus, life in its conceptualization as bios cannot be confined within the limits of the image, but outside of it.

The method of film archaeology that I am applying here examines under the prism of the potentiality of what cinema could have been and of what it was for a specific period of time. Debord's cinema is a paradigm of this thesis. The possibilities of the real can never be captured concretely. Thus, in this particular case, the goal of archaeological investigation is an attempt to go back to time and reconstruct the possibility of an experience of time. Agamben refers to the archaeologist's gesture as the power of the imaginary (Agamben 107). Concerning Debord's films, there is always an empty space that needs to be filled, since the image reveals so little, whilst at the same time the virtual is created in the mind of the viewer.

Towards a Critique of Time and Life

Given the importance that the concept of life has in Guy Debord's work and consequently to its use of time, I shall have to present the theoretical tools that I am using in order to define the concept of life and of how I am applying it. Firstly, my theory is based upon Giorgio Agamben's conception of life as bios. According to the definition given by Agamben in *Homo Sacer I*, the word bios is used in order to indicate "the form or way of living proper to an individual or a group" (Agamben 1). Bios is the organized way of life that results from the contemplative way of thinking thus constituting a form-of-life. In its turn, a form-of life is life that cannot be separated from its form and identifies in many ways with political life which is oriented towards an idea of happiness (Agamben 13-19). Such a concept originates from the Aristotelian conception of the human being as zwon politicon, as a political animal. According to Agamben, the genuine contemporary political element is the idea of the incommunicable (Agamben xv) that Debord has so strikingly pointed out in his films and especially in his second short feature *On the Passage*. Agamben argues that Debord's conviction was based on the ex-centric lifestyle of him and of his friends - something that Debord calls in the aforementioned film a "provisional micro-society", whose uniqueness consists in "an almost ridiculous clandestinity of private life" (Agamben xv).

Debord celebrates this clandestinity in the film which is an elegy for the loss of youth, by composing a film-document that captures abstract moments of his temporality. In pointing out the characteristics of this "micro-society", Debord provides us with a portrait of his marginal and ex-centric life during the fifties: "They said that Oblivion was their ruling passion. They wanted to reinvent everything each day; to become masters and possessors of their own lives" (Debord). The lines are accompanied by shots of photographs of Debord's friends. The voice-over, accompanied with a montage of images of bricks, shots of police cars and the island Saint-Louis in Paris, continues: "No one counted on the future. It would never be possible to be together later, or anywhere else" (Debord).

Debord's idea of cinema then is moving beyond a mere recording of the conditions of the present life. Firstly, he provides us with a narration of things past. In many ways the narration is a search for the lost time of youth. We find Debord's concept of time in a line of thought that starts with the irreversibility of actions such as we find it in Heraclitus, continues with the conceptualization of the vanity of this world with Ecclesiastes and celebrates life and the present time with the poetry of Omar Khayyam. It is a celebration and, at the same time, a mourning for an experience of time that has been exercised in everyday life. For instance: "The refusal of time and growing old, automatically limited encounters in this narrow contingent zone, where what was lacking was felt as irreparable. The extreme precariousness of the means of getting by without working was at the root of this impatience, which made excesses necessary and breaks definitive" (Debord). Secondly, Debord implies that the situationist group has created an autonomous zone that was not part of the everyday life of the petite bourgeoisie in France nor part of the process of production in the factories. The motto "Ne Travaillez Jamais" (Never Work) written on a Parisian wall and captured in a photograph during the 1950's, is the best example of it. The stuationist group was oriented towards the directive: Realization of Philosophy (Debord 1871).

In his text Time and History (2007), Giorgio Agamben mentions that "every conception of history is invariably accompanied by a certain experience of time which is implicit in it, conditions it, and thereby has to be elucidated. Similarly, every culture is first and foremost a particular experience of time, and no new culture is possible without an alteration in this experience. The original task of a genuine revolution, therefore, is never merely to 'change the world', but also-and above all-to 'change time'" (Agamben 99). Debord's critique of the forms of art and life of the past, that still persist in his present, are the center of his polemic. His goal is to point out those decaying forms of life and art from the past which have led to the false consciousness of the present time condition.

Further, Debord's thought associates the false nature of the alienated labor with the false experience of time. In the film *The Society of the Spectacle* (France, 1973) he speaks of a "pseudo-cyclical time" which manifests itself in the everyday life and it is inseparable from the images that the Spectacle produces. By the term pseudo-cyclical time, Debord refers to the appropriation of the manifestation of nature (that is the traces of nature) by capitalism and to its use in the capitalist era. That appropriation leads to the subsequent transformation of nature and it is manifest in an endless construction of images to be consumed. Debord cites as example, the day and the night, the working days and the days of rest and the period of vacation (Debord 1230). The representation of the natural rhythm becomes the medium of the merchandise, since time has been turned into merchandise.

Now, in contrast to the spectacular time of capitalism, the situationist thought tends towards the formulation of its own experience of time. The experience of time in this particular sense is not only an attempt to exist outside the confined limits of spectacular everyday life but also to free everyday life. In the following sequence, accompanied by shots of Parisian cafés, Debord speaks of the experience of time in his temporality: "This Group was on the margins of the economy. It tended towards a role of pure consumption, and first of all, the free consumption of its time. It thus found itself directly engaged in qualitative variations of daily life but deprived of any means to intervene in them" (Debord). And he continues, as he presents a shot of the central market of Paris: "The group ranged over a very small area. The same times found them in the same places. No one went to bed early. Discussion on the meaning of all this continued" (Debord).

Most of the times the narrator refers to his way of living during the 1950's in the past tense. His monologues are strongly characterized by a sense of melancholy. That sentiment is expressed first and foremost in the construction and on the use of the material in his films. Whilst being composed of a variety of documentary footage, of shots of Parisian places and of tracking shots of photographs, the protagonist of both the films is the narrator's voice. Hence, I am arguing that Debord's films are "voco- and verbocentric" (Chion 6). By that I mean, that the voice-over is the

most essential element in the films, since it projects a meaning over the images. Further, the diversity and variety of the films' images, which are combined together through montage, are being unified through the action of speech. In this context the diegesis of the film is being formed by the narrator that argues about an invisible history of a group that identified itself with the transformation of life in the urban landscape and lived according to the Rimbaud-like motto: "real life is elsewhere" (Debord 53). The voice-over's scope aims at three directions: 1) to outline the continuous transformation of urban spaces and a way of living in the 1950's, 2) to reconstruct through language the remembrance of a past that has eclipsed, and 3) to present a personal critique of his times, since Debord identifies his personal history with History. That leads me to my basic argument which is that Guy Debord is a modernist philosopher of time who constructs a montage-palimpsest that consists of traces of the past and of fragments of moments. In that way, Debord reveals his own idea of cinema, that which escapes the pre-established order of time and culture.

Part of his cinematic experience is the non-representable and the incommunicable. He projects the idea that it is impossible to (re)present the experienced time through images; only, his words can commemorate the past and solely through the rhetoric of melancholy and of loss. The loss and consequently the failure of that kind of experience is a recurrent theme in Debord's cinema. The following reflection by Harbord demonstrates the above thesis: "What cinema delivers are fragments that may be assembled as partial things through its signature mode of montage. Cinema is composed of fragments not only in the sense of its multiple sequences that are strung together, but also in its framing of an image cut from a larger whole, and again in its positioning of the camera which can never be a totalizing point of view but only the multiplication of infinite points of view of the event. That is, in every act of recording, cinema demonstrates the opposite, the impossibility of documentation, revealing incompletion as its founding condition" (Harbord 47).

From a cinematographic point of view, what Debord demonstrates in his films is the incompatibility of the cinematic reality and its representations of life with what he calls, inspired by Arthur Rimbaud, the real life. The concept of real life corresponds to a transformation of the everyday. According to this conception, real life in its totality, can not be demonstrated visually. Since real life opens up a space of limitless possibilities, the representation of life would require the subjugation of those possibilities by the image. We find the best example of this thesis in the film *On the Passage*. We, we see a panoramic shot of a photograph of a couple in a café, whilst the narrator mentions: "Human beings are not fully conscious of their real life...usually groping in the dark; overwhelmed by the consequences of their acts; at every moment groups and individuals find themselves confronted with results they have not wished" (Debord).

Debord considers that the liberation of everyday life reveals its limitless possibilities, hence leading to a total transformation of reality. The thinker's approach to the everyday has at its basis Henri Lefebvre's book *Critique of Everyday Life*. In his book, Lefebvre makes a comparison between everyday life and theater. He considers everyday life to resemble to theater as long as it "summarizes, condenses and "represents life" for the real spectators" (Lefebvre 145). For him, in the everyday life appearance and reality mix up. That is due to the propagation of the false conscience that is caused by alienation. Since our conscience is false, our life cannot be realized. And it remains false, since our life remains alienated, (Lefebvre 201). In Debordian terms, the falsehood of the everyday and its theatricality are being depicted in the notion of the Spectacle. According to thesis number 6 of the *Society of the Spectacle*: "The spectacle is not a set of images, but a social relation between persons that is mediated by images" (Debord 767). The thesis points out the separation that has occurred between the real world and a pseudo-world. In this pseudo-world the spectacle mediates between the human being as well as its desires between the relations of human beings. That occurs, since life in the modern world is an immense accumulation of spectacles (Debord 766). According to this thesis, life is represented as a false idea. Since life is represented by a detached image, the time of that life becomes something external to the human

being. She/He lives her/his life through its representation. Consequently, what the Spectacle reproduces is a false idea of life and a false conscience, which is the organization of the relations of production of a given era (Debord 1347-1348). It is in the constructed abstraction of the everyday life that the Spectacle accomplishes to replace the sensible world by a set of selective images. Merchandise and image are now one and inseparable.

Lefebvre and after him Debord reflect upon the praxis that overtakes the false conscience of the everyday. As I have mentioned above, Debord reveals the power of dialectical thinking in his thesis Realization of Philosophy, which is a concept that completes Lefebvre's conception of the goal of dialectical thinking in the everyday. According to Lefebvre: "Dialectical thought can and has to transform itself in the dialectical conscience of life, in life: into a unity of the mediate and of the immediate, of the abstract and the concrete, of culture and of natural spontaneity" (Lefebvre 86). For both thinkers, the theory of praxis cannot be isolated from its actual realization in the everyday life. That will be, then, the inverse movement to that of the Spectacle.

Now, concerning cinema, it is in the fabricated image that represents life that the Spectacle propagates its hegemony. In the beginning of *Critique of Separation* Debord presents his critique and his idea of cinema: "The cinematic spectacle has its rules, its reliable methods for producing satisfactory products. But the reality that must be taken as a point of departure is dissatisfaction. The function of the cinema, whether dramatic or documentary, is to present a false and isolated coherence as a substitute for a communication and activity that are present. To demystify documentary cinema it is necessary to dissolve its 'subject matter'" (Debord). The situationist praxis has as it goal to inverse the spectacular hegemony through dissolving it. So, when Agamben refers to Debord's "almost ridiculous clandestinity of private life" (Agamben xv), he actually refers to exceeding the distinction between the separated forms of life, which are the private and the public.

Debord often refers to his films as documentaries. That kind of classification is accurate and at the same time very limited. Firstly, the performance of the voice upon the images and, secondly, the interaction between the images that is being formulated by montage, form a virtual negation of the existing representations. Benjamin Noys argues that "life is saturated and subsumed by power. For this reason we cannot pass through the image to life, but rather we have to perform an ambiguous un-working on the image, an act of profanation, to free from the image the *dynamis* that exceeds and refuses the deployment of the image within the smooth space of the capitalist sensorium"(Noys 90). But it is only in terms of an absolute negation of the image that we can view Debord's work and that is due to the fact that he uses the voice-over as a means to depict the non-representable. Debord's cinema constitutes, not simply, a negation of the existing order, but above all a praxis that overtakes it. Thus, we see how Debord's anti-cinema becomes an ex-centric cinema.

Language and Time: Forms of Experience

Debord's films apart from polemic works are films that speak of a specific experience of time, without revealing it at the same time. Since, time and life are associated, as I have shown earlier, we can only have a fragmentary idea of Debord's experience of time. He provides us only with a fragment of his conceptualization, thus creating the idea to the viewer that he will only communicate that which will be able to be communicated. In this way Debord expresses the idea of experience of time that can be communicated in the 20th century, after what Agamben has called the destruction of experience.

The fundamental conception of the role of the avant-garde is not only to create new forms of communication, but also, to involve itself with those of the past. Present time in Debord's films seems to be more of a remembering of things past and a desire for the realization of thought in the future. Present time then, can be viewed as a no man's land, as a wasteland and at the same time as a field of possibilities, where the past and the future are trying to relate to each other.

Agamben mentions that "in our century estrangement and the read-made, appropriation and quotation, have represented the last attempts to reconstruct this relationship (at its moments of commitment, the avant-garde has never turned to the future, but represents an extreme effort to relate to the past)" (Agamben 161).

Thus consciousness of the subject can only be formed by and through time. It is through the flaw of time that the subject is being formed. The formation of the subject can take place, only, through discourse. In *Critique of Separation*, Debord refers to the consciousness that he has formed concerning his temporality. Whilst we see a travelling shot of Parisian streets, the narrator declares: "Everything that concerns the sphere of loss — that is to say, the past time I have lost, as well as disappearance, escape, and more generally the flowing past of things, and even what in the prevalent and therefore most vulgar social sense of the use of time is called wasted time — all this finds in that strangely apt old military expression, *en enfants perdus,* its meeting ground with the sphere of discovery, of exploration of unknown terrains; with all the forms of quest, investigation, adventure, avant-garde. It is the crossroads where we have found and lost ourselves." In this passage from the film, the thinker clearly talks about the possibilities of his times and of his consequent failure in his temporality. The image of the street is being used as a metaphor for his quest. Hence, it is a speech that celebrates the possibilities of the real, and at the same time, an account of the non-accomplishment of those possibilities. Thus, Debord's account of his successes and failures, of his adventures and experiments, reveals itself as being a process of discourse in order to lead to his self-consciousness.

It is only in relation to the past that the subject in its literal sense- that which is subjected to, that which lies under- can form its unique singularity and thus create history. In the following passage Agamben mentions that: "If […], the individual can be grasped only as something past, the only way to catch hold of the singularity in its truth is in time. The past tense 'was' in the formula *ti en einai* certainly expresses the identity and continuity of being, but its fundamental achievement, whether or not Aristotle was fully aware of it, is the introduction of time into being. The 'something more profound' that 'is hidden' in the past tense 'was' in time: the *identity* of the being that language has divided, if one attempts to think it, necessarily entails *time*. In the very gesture with which it divides being, language produces time" (Agamben 125). Debord's discourse is an actualization of Agamben's thesis concerning the secrecy and the revelation of things in the present. That is why, I may argue, Debord made those two films in the late 1950's and early 1960's: it was a present that reconciled itself with the past; a revelation of the junction between what was lived in the past and its assimilation in the present.

I consider that the above thesis does not only have an existential quality but that it is also related to Debord's theory of the subject. This concept is the accomplishment and the realization of philosophy and the creation of a new aesthetic subject that will be able to reveal herself /himself in History. In that way, the new subject will be History. This realization and the consequent reflection that it brings about to the subject is formulated in the film *On the Passage.* Whilst the screen remains white we hear the narration: "The appearance of events that we have not made, that others have made against us, obliges us from now on to be aware of the passage of time, its results, the transformation of our own desires into events" (Debord). The director cuts to a close up of a girl, later on to be followed by a photo of a starlet in her bathtub. He continues: "What differentiates the past from the present is precisely its out of reach objectivity; there is no more should be; being is so consumed that it has ceased to exist" (Debord). After that, we see a solar eruption as it interchanges with the shots of the starlet, whilst we are listening to the voice-over: "The details are already lost in the dust of time. Who was afraid of life, afraid of the night, afraid of being taken, afraid of being kept?" (Debord). In this sequence Debord's montage is in strict correlation with the narration. Whilst referring to the passage of time, he shows a white screen, which symbolizes the incommunicable of that experience. Further, he underlines the dichotomy of the past with the

present by presenting a female friend of his as a representation of the past and that of the starlet for the present. Between them, there is a huge gap which is expressed by the eruption.

Conclusion

In this essay I have tried to analyze of the concept of time as it appears in Guy Debord's two films. I have tried to clarify the following two points that concern my problematic: 1) The conceptualization of time that appears in Debord's reflection on life and cinema, and 2) that the evidence of that kind of experience is elliptical and fragmentary. As I have underlined, through the method of film archaeology, the experience of time that Debord so strikingly exclaims is a type of virtual experience that cannot be fully represented in the image. We can only be led to a reconstruction of a hidden (Hi)story through Debord's fragments. In this particular case, photographs, testimonies, film material and above all Debord's voice constitute a series of fragments that help the historian to reconstruct that unknown history.

National University of Athens, Greece

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Philosophy Leaves the Movie Theater: Or, Stanley Cavell at the Doors of a Discipline

FEROZ HASSAN

Abstract: This article explores the idea and practice of philosophical criticism in Stanley Cavell's work on cinema. Building on recent scholarship on Cavellian criticism, it stresses its origins in an anxiety whose sources are medium-specific, historically specific, as well as internal to the general project of philosophical criticism. It argues that these anxieties may serve to explain Film Studies' resistance to criticism in the sense discussed here, and may continue to pose a challenge to its practice even as the work of Cavell itself receives belated recognition from the discipline. The article also begins to draw similarities between the critical practices of André Bazin and Cavell, while examining the differences in the institutional contexts of their work.

Keywords: Stanley Cavell, André Bazin, film criticism, film theory, cinephilia, Classical Hollywood

Over the past decade, Stanley Cavell's presence in debates in Anglophone Film Studies may have arrived at a point where it has ceased to be a scandal, at least within the sub-discipline of "film and philosophy." Special issues, edited volumes, standalone essays, and now entire monographs dealing with Cavell's work on the subject are numerous enough to warrant a separate bibliography. Within this, the work of Andrew Klevan, Daniel Morgan, D. N. Rodowick and Catherine Wheatley, in particular, has come to bear upon the question of philosophical criticism as elaborated and exemplified by Cavell's body of work, and the need to find space for this mode of criticism in the disciplinary work of Film Studies. Apart from through an engagement with Cavell, other scholars such as Dudley Andrew (*Concepts* 172-190) and Daniel Yacavone (229-268) have also argued that films call for criticism as the privileged mode of engagement with them.[1] The impetus for these arguments is the sense that Anglophone Film Studies has been resistant to its practice.

In this essay, while accepting and building on much that the above scholarship makes available for a deferred disciplinary encounter with Cavell, I want to outline the difficulties that are likely to remain in the way of the discipline's embrace of philosophical criticism in practice; or at least to describe the difficulties internal to his work that Cavell had to overcome in his critical project only to remain marginal to the discipline for around four decades. In his autobiography, he recalls a 2007 meeting with Francesco Casetti at a conference where the latter apprised him of the fact that his work is now well-accepted in Italy, even if it took decades for the discipline to catch up with it. Cavell, though "buoyed" by the fact, writes, "But I do not understand what the difficulty has been, given the implication that some difficulty has been overcome" (*Little* 305). I propose to take this question seriously by locating those difficulties within Cavell's own writings and in the project of criticism it models, as opposed to locating them in the intellectual trends that eclipsed it, as many commentators tend to do (Fay and Morgan; Cavell, "Responses" 174-176; Rodowick 204; Stewart).

I

Dudley Andrew contrasts the space of Bazin's work with the study of cinema within the university with reference to Cavell.

[I]n 1971 I hurried to locate *What is Cinema? Volume II* at the bookstore; there it sat alongside its pink predecessor. But just beside it was Stanley Cavell's just published *The World Viewed*, which I remember thumbing through on the spot. Immediately apparent was a set of shared presuppositions and tastes, as well as a talent for elaborate prose; but the tone of the books couldn't have been more different. After all, Cavell, as a philosopher coming to grips with the cinema from his Harvard office, hardly knew his readers, who effectively eavesdropped on his personal ruminations. Bazin's audience, by contrast, pressed constantly around him, reading him every day…, every week…, or every month. He had to be attentive to their interests and to the topics of the day. ("Foreword" xiii)

It is not clear if Andrew is contrasting writing about cinema as part of the kind of public culture Bazin had with writing about cinema from Philosophy departments or with writing about it from the university in general. If Bazin's treatment of neo-realism, as Andrew suggests, is unsurpassable in its insights into that body of work because he responded to it in a live context, are we in the discipline of Film Studies similarly placed to produce such writing about films in our own time by virtue of knowing our readers as colleagues in the discipline? If we are, then why the persistent sense of a crisis in criticism? I believe we should take Andrew's comparison seriously because when some of us claim to miss André Bazin's voice in making sense of the developments in cinema in our own time, we do need to reflect on what kind of a discipline would be able to make room for a voice like his (MacCabe 94–96).

Cavell is intensely conscious about writing in ignorance of an audience; writing brought about by a certain anxiety whose source however was not the university. Cavell actually acquired a consciousness of film's audience and film criticism's readership, at the same time as he acquired an uncertainty of identifying these two, on the way from the movie theater to the university. *The World Viewed*, as almost every recent commentator on it has remarked, begins with Cavell's admission that his natural relation to movies is broken; what caused this break, what that relationship was, and how it might be repaired or commemorated are the burdens of the book (xix). A consequence of this break was that he felt like watching fewer and fewer films. A prospect of something comparable to Lionel Trilling writing about Ingmar Bergman without having watched any of his films looms here (Trilling).

Cavell's anxiety in going to the movies in the 1960s is, for him, at odds with the fond memories of the weekly visits to the movie theater with friends and family that haunt him. He locates the source of this anxiety in the fact that people now went to movies for reasons different from the ones they had earlier (*World Viewed* 11). Earlier moviegoing was "casual," and entrance and exit did not need to be punctual (*World Viewed* 11). But at the same time moviegoing was habitual and indiscriminate. In *Contesting Tears*, he speaks of going to the movies every week, "both Friday nights and Sunday afternoons (rain or shine), where *Stella Dallas* or *Mildred Pierce* or *Mrs. Miniver* were as likely to be playing as *Stagecoach* or *Citizen Kane* or *His Girl Friday*" (209). The emphasis here is on known companionship, regularity of attendance and the variability of genres on offer on any given day.

Now (in postwar United States), for reasons assumed but not specified, people choose whether to go to the movies or not, as opposed to doing something else, based on what was playing. In the background was the fact of the long decline of movie spectatorship in the United States on the back of the breakdown of the classical studio system, the flight of the middle classes to the suburbs, the emergence of alternate forms of recreation, not the least of which was the television. So, now, when people gather in front of the screen, they come with specific expectations: those that are no longer signaled by the stability of genres, and so potentially much more heterogeneous and liable to be met or frustrated in unexpected ways.

Sitting amongst such an "audience," as opposed to classical cinema's "public," Cavell finds that in choosing to watch a particular movie, the implication is that he, and everyone else in the audience, has declared a private choice publicly. Therefore, while earlier, "we took our fantasies and companions and anonymity inside and left with them intact[, n]ow that there is an audience,

a claim is made upon my privacy; so it matters to me that the responses to the film are not really shared" (*World Viewed* 11). A dissatisfaction with the film is now likely to be an affront to one's judgement (since one has to be made) in choosing to watch it; a disagreement with another spectator about what the experience amounted to is a rebuke of the judgment formed in the act of watching it; in either case, it is a rebuke to one's subjectivity.

In the earlier situation, both agreement or disagreement happens on an unreflexive ground— that of the habit of going to the movies whose quality of being shared with known companions preserves one's privacy even in talking about films with them. And, in these circumstances, film is as likely to be carried out by the spectators in enactment—such as through instinctively adopting a new way of walking or speaking, or children acting out bits from films in play—as in conversations with friends with whom we share concerns besides films (*World Viewed* 9-10). But now that our companions in the movie theater are unknown, we either have to remain alone with our fantasies or risk sharing them with strangers and so expose our subjectivity to unpredictable encounters that risk making us incomprehensible to them, and of meeting with indifference.[2] And, as Cavell's philosophical preoccupations throughout his body of work make clear, to remain unacknowledged by others, and to not be able to acknowledge their subjectivities in return, is to remain in doubt of one's existence.[3]

Cavell does not speak of distaste for the new situation, but of an anxiety, as if he needs to account for the mere fact of watching a film, depriving him of a quality of movie experience that he would go on to cast in philosophical terms. For him, the appearance of photography and film marks a shift in the terms of the problem of skepticism in modern philosophy, understood as a doubt about the existence of the world independent of our assertion of it, and in the face of the diminishing power of shared transcendental structures to provide the conditions for its existence. Our relationship with the world becomes dependent on our subjectivity. This is what Romanticism calls for in art. Photography and film change the terms of this relationship by producing a world mechanically, independent of our subjectivity. (*World Viewed* 21-23)

The consequence of the mechanically produced image is not just an assertion of the world's existence, but of its existence without us. This sounds like a price to be paid, as Wheatley understands it (71). However, as Morgan too underlines, the consequence of this exclusion is not the experience of a price paid, but a sense of "magic" and "relief" (*World Viewed* 101; Morgan 222-224). The relief comes from being able to view the world "unseen", to no longer be responsible for it. However completely a film captivates us, its world and its characters are indifferent to our presence; indeed, it can captivate us all the more completely precisely because it, and they, are entirely indifferent to our presence or absence, let alone our individuality and punctuality (or otherwise).[4]

Before proceeding further, an important clarification of the word "world" in Cavell's work on film. The "world" on screen is not to be understood as a passive recording by film of reality. A world on film is, to put it schematically, whatever the diegesis is (however improbable), but built out of the camera's transformation (what Cavell calls "photogenesis") of objects and bodies that appear to it; transformation of them potentially into anything at all (Cavell, "What Becomes"). The word "camera" stands here for all aspects, including editing and other processes right up to the conditions of projection, that produce the film on the screen (*World Viewed* 182-186). Star bodies are particularly exemplary products of these powers of film since the personae they project exceed any particular character they inhabit. What this means, for example, is that the mystique of solitude that is Greta Garbo's star persona precedes and survives any of the characters that Garbo plays, and is not reducible to the life of Greta Lovisa Gustafsson who is transformed into Garbo by film. Ultimately, film "escapes Aristotelian limits according to which the possible has to be made probable" (*World Viewed* 156).

In its classical phase, film's indifference to its spectators is not a matter of concern for us. Film's mode of assertion of the world's existence is not in response to "a wish for power of creation of

the world (as Pygmalion's was), but a wish not to need power, not to have to bear its burdens" (*World Viewed* 40).[5] What then requires explaining is the need to be free of our responsibility for the world, for that privacy and anonymity in the movie theatre whose loss had plunged Cavell into anxiety. In more straightforward terms, the freedom *from* the world that Cavell argues cinema has offered us is the granting for the wish to escape from our responsibility towards it. This wish is, therefore, also indirectly a wish to not be responsible for explaining publicly why the cinema or its particular instances have the significance they do apart from accounting for the need for the escape route they provide. There is no *call* for an autonomous practice of criticism in this experience or even theory, beyond conversations with known companions. It does not mean that in this context people do not criticize or theorize; it is just that so long as they maintain this "natural relation," they do not feel the compulsion to argue for those views publicly that Cavell says he did. This natural relation may have been broken for a few people in the preceding decades as they too reflected on cinema's place in society, but Cavell is speaking about such a break for an entire generation. Also, that this relation is broken does not mean that people necessarily argue for their idea of cinema and the value of specific films publicly. As we will see later, Cavell suggests that one response to the break is to adopt a deliberate distance from our attachment to films.[6]

To account for the wish for escape from the world, Cavell describes it as "an expression of *modern* privacy or anonymity, of our forms of unknownness and of our inability to know." It is a product of the anxieties of a modernity that promises a democratic share in the fate of the world but fails to deliver upon that promise; or the world simply makes too many demands upon us to arrive at a condition that we would like it be in: for example, to preserve itself as a just society. In catering to our wish to escape responsibility, cinema emerges as a way of dealing with a sense that "democracy itself, the sacred image of secular politics, is unliveable," making it "inherently anarchic" (*World Viewed* 214; my emphasis).[7] It is only when this wish for escape is no longer sufficient to go to the movies does the question of film criticism as an autonomous practice arise. Given this context of *The World Viewed*, the book begins with a nostalgia for a time when neither theory nor criticism as public discourse were required. And this is how Cavell ends up writing from the university, intensely conscious of having to write as well as of where he is not writing from. The solitude of the university is an extension of solitude at the movie theater.

II

Cavell's anxiety about, in a sense, becoming visible to others in the audience is also compounded by, in another sense, becoming visible to the film on the screen too. This comes about through the new kinds of films not only circulating in the arthouses but also from a post-classical Hollywood. Films become more self-conscious and less confident in the ability of their images to assert the self-evidence of what they show. A certain aggressiveness, or alternately withdrawal, of the camera from the world it presents ends up soliciting the spectator's attention explicitly, as if it were a prerequisite for appearance of a world on screen. We are now called to acknowledge the inventiveness of a particular technique or to fill in ellipses that the camera is helpless to capture with any conviction.

In its classical phase, the cinema "promises the exhibition *of the world* in itself. This is its promise of candor: that what it reveals is entirely what is revealed to it, that nothing revealed by the world in its presence is lost" (*World Viewed* 119; my emphasis). There are two keywords here to which Cavell gives very particular meanings: candor and exhibition. Candor is the quality by which the world appears on screen "independently of me or any audience, that… [is] complete without me, in that sense *closed* to me" (*World Viewed* 111). His use of "exhibition" is even more interesting, given the term's centrality in the film trade and in Film Studies to refer to the spaces and processes of screening films. He says films "are simply not exhibited (or performed) but distributed and screened and viewed" (*World Viewed* 122).

The denial of the quality of exhibition in classical cinema is required by the meaning Cavell attaches to the word "exhibition" in any art's modernist condition, whereby each work of compensates for its sense of loss of connection with its traditional forms by including a new, unforeseen justification within itself for its existence, for the particular form in which it exists. It becomes aware of its inescapably "exhibited" character, as if the validity of its particular justification, and so its existence, is in question with every spectator/reader/listener encountered (*World Viewed* 120). If classical cinema could rely on the "automatic" powers of its physical medium and those of its supplementary media of genres, stars, screen types etc. in summoning a public which is not required to intervene, and also powerless to intervene, in its workings, it means that it could not have existed in the condition of exhibition; rather, it simply "allow[ed] the world to exhibit itself." With a loss of this confidence, films in the new era started "taking over the task of exhibition" (*World Viewed* 132).

The "sudden storms of flash insets and freeze frames and slow-motions and telescopic-lens shots and fast cuts and negative printing and blurred focusing" end up explicitly soliciting the spectator's assent, withdrawing from us that cloak of privacy that cinema had granted us (*World Viewed* 122). The unease that this gives rise to is not idiosyncratic with Cavell. We can find another well-known expression of it in an essay by Roland Barthes, starting with its title, "Leaving the movie theater." Barthes's brief essay evokes anxieties very similar to Cavell's: the increasing transformation of visits to the movie theater into "specific cultural quest(s)," "the frustration of so-called private showings" that impinge upon the anonymity, and constrain the sense of irresponsibility, he seeks at the movie theatre (Barthes 345-346). I will return to Barthes's essay below in distinguishing Cavell's critical procedures from cinephilic criticism.

III

Wheatley provides a rich synthesis of the various modalities of Cavell's philosophical criticism as understood broadly. Just to list some of these: criticism is rooted in one's personal experience of the film; it involves conversation as an attempt to make oneself comprehensible and so to gain a recognition for one's own experience; despite speaking out of a personal experience, the critic speaks for everyone; for one's interlocutors, it is as much about them becoming interested in their own experience as in grasping the critic's; criticism is a performance and a "passionate utterance." Each of these aspects receives its due attention from her. My concern is that, even if these modalities become clear because of the recent work of Wheatley and others, even if the discipline manages to remind itself what this criticism is and what its value is, not confronting the deeper anxieties attending film criticism, and the challenge to disciplinarity it poses, will hide from us the difficulty of the practice of criticism in the university. I will also, in going over these anxieties, distinguish philosophical criticism from the rather different response by cinephilic criticism to the anxieties discussed here.

Let us return to the question of Cavell's ignorance of his readers. In *A Pitch of Philosophy*, he broaches the subject of philosophy's audience: "Philosophy is essentially uncertain whom in a given moment it seeks to interest. Even when it cannot want exclusiveness, it cannot tolerate common opinion" (5). There are two movements here, one towards an uncertain audience, and the second an impulse to withdrawal from the "common opinion" it is bound to encounter in its search for an audience. But why look for an audience at all? The answer is because of philosophy's intuition that what it does is do-able by anyone: "Science can be said to have no audience, for no one can fully understand it who cannot engage in it…" (*Pitch* 5). In other words, philosophy, since anyone *can* tap into the import of its topics without being a professional philosopher, and indeed that most people to variable extent come up against the questions it takes as its subject, is necessarily on *common* ground, with no greater claim at the outset to what it wants to speak of than anyone else.

Film, like philosophy, is common ground. As Cavell underlines, there is a "requirement for a *certain* indiscriminateness in the acceptance of movies," so that "in the case of films, it is generally true that you do not really like the highest instances unless you also like the typical ones" (*World Viewed* 13, 6.) In the case of the other arts, the hierarchies of seriousness are strictly defined, so that the appreciation of the popular does not generally go with a taste for the serious.[8] Films, therefore, belong to everyone. Anyone can be a critic, even a compelling critic, as is abundantly clear in the digital age. But just to remain with professional film critics, they derive their authority through, at first, their utility in helping readers pick and choose what they watch, so they cannot be *seen* to place themselves outside common opinion, whatever the sophistication of their insights. That is what Andrew emphasizes when speaking of Bazin's grounded-ness in the film public of his time. Without some such alibi, the fact that philosophy arrogates to itself the right to speak for everyone is apt to appear arrogant even when "[there] is a humility or poverty in this arrogation, since appealing to the [ordinary]… is obeying it—suffering its intelligibility and alms of commonness…. (Cavell, *Pitch* 8)," and thereby suffering others' experience of it.

Film Studies, as a university discipline, like philosophy, has to contend with the radical fact that it has no a priori authority over its objects. A discipline in the humanities cannot exempt itself from the common ground, which is why, when, in the classroom, we stick to the experience of a film as a way to its significance, our disciplinary authority remains vulnerable to the authority of the students' experiences in a way that the authority of a teacher of the sciences is not.[9] This is where we need to take Cavell's doubt seriously about whether cinema has, even after the 1950s, ever really existed in the modernist condition as absolutely as the other arts have and as we are sometimes inclined to think.

Yes, the separation of serious and casual audience by venues of spectatorship may have made possible films that are required to reflect upon their procedures and to betray their awareness of an audience. But the arthouses are haunted by the continued viability of the classical forms, not just in the fact that they continue to commemorate the achievements of the classical era (so do museums of the plastic arts) but in the fact that conventional films continue to be made and viewed in large numbers. The arthouse *audience* exists exclusively in the condition of modernism in having to be reflexive in its relationship to cinema, but cinema as a whole does not, not even in the arthouse. This sense is what once prompted Miriam Hansen, speaking as a champion of non-classical early cinema, to bemoan the fact that, "Ironically the European art film has become one of the more likely places for contemporary viewers to expect a relatively high degree of classical absorption" (199n4). The "*de facto* exclusiveness" of the other arts has caused all their serious instances to deliver themselves bound hand-and-foot to the judgment of small groups of connoisseurs; cinema, largely, has not. In fact, cinema's new "audience" may not be its old "public" but it is still an audience, whereas contemporary art generally exists without a significant audience (*World Viewed* 4).

The fact that serious films continue to be made for mass publics is a continual source of anxiety for a modernist audience that flits between elaborate critical gestures of resisting the suggestions of hierarchy in the new situation and an assertion of hierarchy accompanied by an almost resentful denunciation of the power cinematic conventions continue to enjoy. This, among other reasons, is why Cavell clarifies that the concept of modernism cannot be applied to cinema in the same way as in the other arts (*World Viewed* 215-219). This makes for a strange situation in which a modernist audience confronts an artform that is not itself straightforwardly modernist. Therefore, a critical community has no a priori claims to arguing for the significance of films. The disciplinary avoidance of criticism in the sense being discussed here may just be a consequence of films' stubborn refusal to heed announcements of the death of cinema.

In explaining why he writes the way he does, Cavell speaks of the inevitability, given the commonness of its ground, of the autobiographical as the source for the authority to speak

philosophy. "Philosophers who shun the autobiographical must find another route to philosophical authority, to, let's say, the a priori, to speaking with necessity and universality (logic, Kant says, is such a route)…" (*Pitch* 8). Autobiography here must not be understood as necessarily the critic's recounting specific experiences, but her signaling an investment, even indirectly, in the film, and so in her argument.

Autobiographical or not, philosophy does attempt to speak with necessity and universality, precisely because, being on common ground, it cannot lay claim to private truths. Looked at another way, if one speaks without an awareness of the requirement for necessity and universality, one is fated to remaining with private truths, deprived of the recognition of those who share the common ground, and so subject to doubts about the truthfulness of those truths.[10] The universality in question here is not an abstract one, but one that assumes an interlocutor willing to examine the occupation of that common ground with the critic. This is the universality of "friends," except that such friends are no longer only determinate persons, but ones to be imagined in the act of criticism, strangers who might be friends (*World Viewed* xxv; *Contesting* 11-12; *Cities* 42). Even so, the claiming of necessity and universality is necessarily and universally fated to failure, but not for all time to the extent that it can contend with, be shaped by and survive for a time the alternate accounts of its topics that emerge in the quest of an argument. The same holds true for philosophical film criticism.

The source of anxiety in speaking of films in this way—striving towards necessity and universality from the grounds of the autobiographical and the assumption of unknown friends—is not the eventual evanescence of its claims; open-endedness and provisionality are acknowledged as necessary accompaniments of even scientific knowledge. But what is subject to the threat of evanescence in philosophical criticism is the value of the subjectivity that has been shared publicly. Cavell elsewhere announces another anxiety that beset his writing early in his career that made him delay its publication. At one point, when Arthur Danto asked him if he has not published much because he does not like writing. Cavell says:

> I could not protest that I had written more than I had published, because I seemed to recognize that that might only prove the truth of Arthur's surmise, not that I hadn't in some sense written, but that what kept me from offering it to strangers was not simply my fear that it wasn't good enough but, compounded with that, *the fear that my pleasure in it would show, which for some reason would constitute a worse exposure*. I guess it is not news that philosophy is as forbidding as it is attractive. ("Crossing Paths" 363-364, my emphasis)

Wheatley cites these lines, too, but to emphasize that Cavell loved to write (217). But they also suggest consequences of that love that she underlines a little later. Pleasure as a mark of subjective investment leaving traces in the arguments is in excess of the logic of the argument. When someone refutes the logic, your subjectivity is compromised beyond the extent to which it is caught up in concerns of the professional standing of the argument. It becomes "rebukable" (Wheatley 237). The idea here is that love may betray.

<p style="text-align:center">IV</p>

Love in criticism, disciplinary or not, betrays for a few reasons to do with the nature of its object, apart from the fact of the threat of rebuke by interlocutors. The first reason is that, when we love a film, we love a world it projects and from which we are screened. As seen earlier, this allows us to secure our subjectivity by granting autonomy to that world, by recognizing its otherness. When we then provide an account of it, we need to speak in a way that allows that world to have a say in its reading, even as we seek a voice for our own experience of it (*World Viewed* 13).[11] What we have to say may "[go] beyond anything the film knows about itself" (as what we have to say about others may exceed what they know about themselves), but it still needs to be measured

against the film as it stands (Cavell, *Cities* 116). We grant the text a say in its own reading because its otherness is a precondition for the autonomy of our own judgment and subjectivity; one can be implicated in a film and remain autonomous.

But it remains a fact that, while a film may make itself available for examination by experience and criticism, it is incapable of vouching for our arguments about it. Therefore, it would be incorrect to say that allowing a film to have a say in its reading is also sharing the responsibility for that reading with it. Which is why it is important to identify the corollary to Cavell's claim that in art, "we treat certain objects, in ways normally reserved for treating persons" ("Music" 189). We treat organizations too as legal persons, and they can be represented and be made to respond to specific demands for clarifications. A work of art can only repeat itself (something that has become generally possible with films only recently) and we can hope that with each repetition we might come to understand what it means to say. In criticism, we may lose the promise of irresponsibility towards the world on film, but a film, however reflexive, cannot overcome the limits to its responsibility towards us.[12]

The second reason is that films, at least in their theatrical form, are as much events as texts. How you relate to them is bound up with where, when and with whom they are watched. Films, therefore, are not just analogous to ordinary life because of their availability to large masses of people, but also entwined with ordinary and particular lives (*World Viewed* 10). When we go to watch a film, what we do on the way to it and after it, who we watch it with, the weather that day, all intervene in our experience and, therefore, memories of the film. Under these circumstances, "This is an epitome of the nature of conversation about film generally, that those who are experiencing again, and expressing, moments of a film are apt at any time to become incomprehensible (in some specific mode, perhaps enthusiastic to the point of folly) to those not experiencing them (again)" (Cavell, *Pursuits* 11). What this suggests is that film, because of the intimacy of its experience, easily invites ways of speaking about it not through appeal to an examined subjectivity proceeding through a careful reexamination of films, but through a *recapitulation* of subjectivity and its assertion.

At this point, we can distinguish the sort of criticism modelled by Cavell from cinephilic criticism. To return for a moment to "Leaving the movie theater," Barthes's response there to the anxiety of the new moviegoing situation was also compounded by his sharing the suspicion of films' realist-ideological "lure" (Barthes 347). His coping strategy was to watch the film, as it were, at a glance, fetishizing the light-beam and images and sounds displaced from their integration into the film's plot. Philip Watts reads Barthes's contribution as a first step in breaking away from post-1968 cinephobia that criticized such integration on ideological grounds. Watts, therefore, see this essay as opening the way to writings on cinema by Gilles Deleuze and Jacques Rancière (66-67).

What is strikingly clear about the works of Deleuze and Rancière is their reconnection with the French cinephilic experience in the postwar decades that was the context of their own moviegoing. Therefore, Barthes's essay is as much a way of reconnecting with the pre-cinephobic moment, without overcoming the grounds of cinephobia, as it is about marking a way out of the paranoia of ideology critique. If this is indeed the case, it should point to the anxieties inherent in the cinephilic mode of spectatorship itself, making it no longer possible to oppose cinephilia to cinephobia.

Christian Keathley glosses Paul Willemen's idea of the "cinephiliac moment," the cornerstone of cinephilic criticism, as "the fetishizing of fragments of film, either individual shots or marginal (often unintentional) details in the image, especially those that appear only for a moment" (7). The catalogue of such moments will differ from cinephile to cinephile, and that is its promise of intense subjectivization of films. Cinephiles are interested in describing and sharing these moments, but seemingly only to the extent of announcing them to their peers, not so much to have everyone else (beyond a small circle of friends) share in them as for others to recognize their sovereignty

over them. Thomas Elsaesser argues that this battle over ownership over *auteurs*—and films that furnished cinephilic critics their privileged fragments—may have tipped a later phase of postwar cinephilia over into the cinephobia of ideology critique (31-32). If a cinephile's catalogue of privileged moments were to become generally shareable, it would be experienced as a loss of the uniqueness of their own experience. D. A. Miller, in his recent work as a late-blooming cinephilic critic, exemplifies cinephilic criticism as a product of the "Too-Close Viewer" whose itinerary of fragment-hunting is defined by personal eccentricity that "can afford no… pretension to speak for everyone: universality would abolish him!" (11). Cinephiles, like Barthes and Miller, looking to rescue images or sounds from the flow of a film, give themselves over to films in exchange for the promise of being able to have unique claims on them.

Elsaesser writes, "Cinephiles were always ready to give in to the anxiety of possible loss, to mourn the once sensuous-sensory plenitude of the celluloid image, and to insist on the irrecoverably fleeting nature of a film's experience…" (33). But Elsaesser does not have a convincing explanation for why cinephilia as this symbiosis of enchantment and disenchantment in response to the fleeting character of film experience emerges as a wider phenomenon in film culture only after World War II.[13] Fandom, even when finding intensely personal expression in the keeping of scrapbooks, is not as jealous of its attachments as cinephilia is. Noting the sources of Cavell's and Barthes's anxieties allows us to read this as a response to the changing context of spectatorship.

As young postwar cinephiles assembled to watch films screened by familiar programmers like Henri Langlois, waiting to parse the unpredictable crisscrossing of a then five-decade old film history, they fetishized not only personal tastes in films, but also the act of watching films from as close as possible, as if to recover the quality of films as personal events and the privacy among known companions (Truffaut). But because films do become, as Barthes put it, "specific cultural quests" for the young, perhaps *the* primary terrain of such quests at this point in history, such privacy must be *claimed* on the terrain of public culture, as opposed to it being *available* publicly as in the classical moviegoing experience. We see these contradictions leaving a mark in the legendary pages of *Cahiers du cinéma* (hereon, *Cahiers*). Here, the young critics, even as they erect canons that would define film conversation for a long time, seem to bear out the truth of Cavell's claim that the logic of assertions is that "my saying of them makes their meaning private" even if saying them makes the objects of assertion widely available (*World Viewed* 127).

The battle over tastes in 1950s' France has left a permanent mark on film discourse everywhere, so I don't think the fixation of the younger critics (I don't mean Bazin here) on fragments of films in their assertions of taste, and so the priority of the *mise-en-scène* as a criterion of judgment, needs much recounting. This is one way of claiming a public recognition of a personal experience; but the writings of these critics, in their fixations, often enough borders on the incomprehensible even if you are intimately familiar with the images they are talking about. What holds our attention and makes us go over them repeatedly is their passionate investment in seeking recognition for certain images. They are straining for the classical experience of moviegoing, seeking the world without having to be publicly answerable to/for it. And the density of their writing signals the anxiety of having become answerable. I will only place one example of this criticism here alongside Cavell's characterization of criticism as the practice of aesthetic judgment.

> It is essential to making an aesthetic judgment that at some point we be prepared to say in its support: don't you see, don't you hear, don't you dig? The best critic will know the best points… At some point, the critic will have to say: This is what I see. Reasons—at definite points, for definite reasons, in different circumstances—come to an end. ("Aesthetic Problems" 93)

Reading Cavell on the comedies of remarriage and on specific Hollywood melodramas is to see a critic postponing the moment when a helpless assertion of judgment and, therefore, withdrawal from conversation becomes inevitable. Jacques Rivette *begins* his famous piece on Howard Hawks with:

> The evidence on the screen is the proof of Hawks's genius: you only have to watch *Monkey Business* to know that it is a brilliant film. Some people refuse to admit this, however; they refuse to be satisfied by proof. There can't be any other reason why they don't recognize it. (126)

Cinephilic criticism as exemplified in the case of the Young Turks at *Cahiers*, and by others in their continuing lineage, may be proof that we are not yet immune to film's promise of giving us a world that does not need us for its existence. But it is also apt to be at some level a protest against having to become answerable for it. While acknowledging the contradictions inherent in the situation of film criticism, Cavell also says, "The love that philosophy can teach is the power to accept intimacy without taking it personally" and also that "philosophy is the achievement of the unpolemical" (*World Viewed* 100; *Pitch* 22). Therefore, criticism based on love in the philosophical sense is to be distinguished from cinephilia.[14]

<div align="center">V</div>

The two reasons I have laid out so far for the claim that love for films as the basis for criticism betrays the writer's subjectivity, in the sense of making it questionable, not simply palpable, are that a) films cannot vouch for our readings, and b) the event-like character of moviegoing that entwines films intimately with our lives and so increasing the stakes of criticism beyond the logic of our arguments. The third, and perhaps the most important reason, is that the objects of our love are inevitably compromised in the ideological realms they lead us into. This was not the great discovery of ideology critique. Episodes of moral panic in the history of cinema are one sort of outrageous response to this knowledge, and a paranoid ideology critique another; and both are not quite reconciled to the inevitability of ideological compromise. If moralists believe they can moralize cinema, political modernists believe there must be another kind of cinema, or another kind of spectatorship, that could help us escape the ideological compromises of most cinema.

   Cavell and Bazin were deeply aware of the inescapability of an "illicitness" in the cinema. Cavell is clear that the new audience does not escape it either. When he contrasts the "casualness of moviegoing" in the classical phase with the "casualness of movie-viewing" in the new situation, he is certainly not suggesting that the new audience is not serious about the films it watches. On the contrary, its seriousness takes the form of vigilance and skepticism towards the fantasies that films offer. When that vigilance does not translate into denunciation, he seems to be suggesting that it takes the form of a forced casualness of response as a way of disavowing our implication in those fantasies (*World Viewed* 11–12).

   Bazin, whose essay on theater and cinema Cavell's words seem to echo, offers a fascinating exposé of the wish for escape and voyeurism at the cinema.[15] Some of his words cannot go uncited here:

> An honest appraisal of the respective pleasures derived from theater and cinema… forces us to admit that… *in the best of films* something [of the moral quality of experience] is missing. It is as if a certain inevitable lowering of the charge, some mysterious aesthetic short circuit, deprived us in the cinema of a certain tension which is a definite part of the theater. ("Theater and cinema" 98, my emphasis)
> —
> Incontestably, there is in the pleasure derived from cinema and novel a self-satisfaction, a concession to solitude, a sort of betrayal of action by a refusal of social responsibility. ("Theater and cinema" 100)

As if this inescapable illicitness in the film experience itself weren't enough of a disincentive to making our love of films public, there are the ideological contradictions in which specific films entangle us, and a criticism based in the love of those films needs to acknowledge those contradictions without disavowing our attachment to the films. Bazin's complete body of work is a repeated demonstration of this practice, but an obvious example to illustrate it would be in his account of the development of the myth of the western on film. In particular, he demonstrates how the genre, after World War II, betrays a greater awareness of its myth's roots in the genocide

of Native Americans and a misogyny that often appears as an idealization of the genre's women ("Evolution" 151; "*Outlaw*"). Despite this, Bazin still hopes that generations to come will have the chance to watch and appreciate the mythic force of the western ("Evolution" 157). Does that make him a racist or a misogynist? We can look at some roughly analogous circumstances in Cavell's work before arriving at a nuanced answer.

Cavell too, as is well known, was deeply invested in the mythology of "America" as an ambiguous promise, but a promise nonetheless. The writing of *The World Viewed* coincided, as he recalls in a 2000 interview with *Cahiers*, with a crisis not just in the experience of moviegoing for him, but also "the loss of America with the Vietnam war. It was a matter of re-establishing as best as possible what [he] considered lost" (de Baecque 74 & 79). The idea of reestablishing is not a matter of restoring it to what it was but a matter of reparation "in a dialectical sense," amounting not to the recovery of the lost object but to accounting for and "maintaining the relationship" with what has been lost, and prolonging whatever in it can still seem to us as a promise in new ways (de Baecque 80 & 73). In any case, what was lost was not an idealization.

The twin senses of the loss of America and of cinema coincide perfectly in Cavell's words on *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962), which "is the fullest expression of the knowledge of the cost of civilization…. In so fully opening the legend of the West, it ends it." And in ending it, this is what it reveals of its origins:

> The gorgeous, suspended skies achieved in the works of, say, John Ford, are as vacant as the land. When the Indians are gone, they will take with them whatever gods inhabited those places, leaving the beautiful names we do not understand (Iroquois, Shenandoah, Mississippi, Cheyenne) in place of those places we will not understand. So our slaughtered beauty mocks us, and gods become legends. (*World Viewed* 60)

The myth stands exposed as originating in slaughter, but it is also too late for many spectators, especially of Cavell's generation, to disown it, having lived off it for so long. The only way to repair it is to try to see if whatever promise it held can be taken up again in different circumstances and in better faith whose own contradictions will appear in their own time, and they will not necessarily be the ones that seem the most obvious right now.

Being compromised by our love of films in writing about them is to accept our having been unavoidably tainted by them. The "taint of villainy in maleness" is how Cavell characterizes one important source of the shadows that hang over the remarriage comedies as their couples set out again on their pursuits of happiness. But, of course, the taint of male villainy sticks to anyone who is willing to grant the point of promise to which the couples manage to find their way, even if temporarily and ambiguously. And it sticks especially to a *man* who is asking us to grant the films that promise despite the acknowledged taint. That was the charge brought against him by feminist critics, and the charge of being tainted he is not inclined to deny (*Contesting* 109). He even cites John Stuart Mill's claim that a large proportion of men's writing may in fact be "systematic plagiarism" of women's thoughts (*Cities* 100-101; *Pitch* 16). But what he asks in return is for his readers to distinguish "the taint of villainy" from "villainous, intractable, vengeful evil" (*Contesting* 124). He asks us to see that in the comedies "happiness in even these immensely privileged marriages exists only so far as the pair together locate and contain this taint—you may say domesticate it, make a home for it—as if the task of marriage is to overcome the villainy in marriage itself" (*Contesting* 85).

Criticism's task too is to identify and contain, not deny or disavow, the taints from our attachments, in the hope of domesticating them so that they do not consume us entirely. We must be careful, however, not to assume that criticism is confessional, a temptation given the centrality of the autobiographical to it. A confession hands over the responsibility of the taint to the ones receiving the confession, and the autobiographical can easily become narcissistic and solipsistic, a charge Cavell's critics were too ready to make against him.

In any case, ideological taints are often inherited, even if from our former selves; the objects of attachments that taint us are consigned to history, leaving us with an inescapable responsibility for them. And since you cannot deny that responsibility, you cannot hope to acquit yourself. The thing to realize, as Cavell says, is that there are "arguments that must not be won," even as they are not to be avoided (*Pitch* 22). And so, the critic is at the mercy of the recognition by readers of her good faith, not just of her good arguments. Perhaps that is also what Bazin meant when, at the end of his "Defense of Rosellini" addressed to Guido Aristarco, he writes:

> I do not expect to have convinced you, my dear Aristarco. In any event, it is never with arguments that one wins over a person. The conviction one puts into them often counts for more. I shall be satisfied if just my conviction… serves at least to stimulate your own. ("Defense" 101)

Bazin's continued attachment to the western, similarly, was a conviction that the genre had been able to evolve by confronting its own contradictions, and so modifying its myth as it went along without disavowing it. This internal modification of the myth is what he argues for in postwar westerns by charting the shift from "history as material" to "history as subject" in the genre ("Evolution" 151). And the myth itself, both Cavell and he would argue, was never articulated without the genre's best films' awareness of those contradictions, especially the contradiction that is its central element: the establishment of the law through means outside of it (Bazin "The Western" 145–147; *World Viewed* 58–59).

The possibility that conviction in argument will not be sufficient to receive the benefit of doubt, or that the conviction itself may not materialize, is the tragic, but not regrettable or pitiful, character of aesthetic judgment, and so of philosophical criticism. "Tragedy is the necessity of having your own experience and learning from it; comedy is the possibility of having it in good time" (*Pursuits* 238). Criticism may remain tragic, and therefore already an accomplishment, or succeed in having others share in confronting the tragedies of attachments and so be transformed into the comedic.

VI

Returning to the question of the place of criticism in the discipline of Film Studies, let us take up again the issue of the "common" ground on which films exist. Firstly, quite apart from not having a priori claims to its objects in general, the discipline also needs to contend with the fact that its a priori claim to the study of films even within the university is liable to be bypassed. It is not a matter of small chagrin for film scholars that literature and philosophy professors believe they can write about film without necessarily placing themselves in the lineage of arguments internal to the discipline's history. What is more, a Cavell, a D. A. Miller, and a Lauren Berlant may write compellingly about films in this manner. Cavell's work, of course, has been a prominent object of such chagrin (Musser; Fairfax).

Whether it be the period of high theory in the 1970s or the subsequent archival turn, the Anglophone discipline of Film Studies has sought to secure its identity through a displacement of films themselves. As Rodowick writes, "a discipline's coherence derives not from the objects it examines but rather from the concepts and methods it mobilizes to generate critical thought (ix)." But we have arrived at a point where we aspire to do "film scholarship without films (Smoodin, 2007 2)," and confine "film analysis" primarily to the classroom (Smoodin, 2014 100). As we saw earlier, Cavell's claim is, "Philosophers who shun the autobiographical must find another route to philosophical authority…" (*Pitch* 8). First, Theory, then the archive, alongside analytical criticism, have been the discipline's primary routes to its own authority in the common realm of cinema.

The archival turn, in particular, comes with a claim to inclusiveness as we push aside the privileged subjectivities of film scholars to deal with the dense historical record of that democratic commonness that circulates around films (Karnick and Jenkins). And yet, that claim to inclusiveness

could also be read as a technocratic claim to expertise in conversations around films, or rather film culture, given a degree of inescapable vulnerability of any expert's subjectivity (historian's or philosopher's) on the ground of the films themselves, as against the privileged access to, and the authority of, archives. Film analysis as primarily formal analysis also secures disciplinary expertise by constraining subjective investment. And philosophical film criticism that foregrounds the critic's subjectivity, without becoming solipsistic, as a way of engaging other subjectivities in its objects may well be an acceding to institutional privilege in order to privilege the subjectivities of whatever readers it finds.

There is no space here for exploring at length the resistance from film historiography or any other impersonal framework of scholarship to the kind of criticism that Bazin and Cavell model —one from within a live film culture and the other from the university. Such an exploration would have to engage with the politics of expertise in the study of culture. In any case, the value of history, sociology, anthropology, or any other empirical framework that takes film culture as its object certainly cannot be doubted on its own terms, even if the systematic preference for these terms over those of criticism is bound to give some of us pause. Film criticism can and should learn from this scholarship, even as it resists attempts to define the significance of films primarily through those methods.

A more intimate and insidious resistance may actually show up in an extended exegesis of film critics and philosophers itself. A reflection on disciplinary practices, especially new or rusty ones, is essential to prepare the ground for the practice itself. The relevance of the ongoing re-evaluation of the history of film theory could be a part of this preparation. But if we find ourselves for too long mainly going over the work of film philosophers or critics, arguing for the importance of film philosophy or philosophical criticism, as the present article does, we may find ourselves afflicted by, to borrow a phrase Cavell uses to describe a certain sort of music criticism, "a protracted cough of philosophy" ("Music" 185).

Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kanpur, India

Notes

1 I am here conflating the terms "criticism", "interpretation" and "hermeneutics" without denying the possibility of differing characterizations of each of these terms as well as the different cases that various scholars may be making for criticism in film scholarship.

2 The anonymity of other spectators at arthouses may seem counter-intuitive given the well-known fact that they have been the site for the formation of strong cinephilic communities. However, cinephilic companionship is staked primarily on our relationship with films so that the "privacy" of a companionship defined on grounds outside of cinema is denied in such communities. I return to the question of cinephilic spectatorship later in the argument.

3 Rodowick misses Cavell's anxiety in watching films in the new situation, which is in fact the stimulus to criticism, when he speaks of Cavell's work as "examin[ing] how the presence of a community frames our pleasurable engagement with these activities [of considering our ontological fascination with screened

images and film's dramatization of moral reasoning" (185). Morgan, too, though otherwise calling attention to Cavell's situatedness in modernism, takes for granted "Cavell's insistence on the importance of… the collective nature of cinematic spectatorship" (2020 209). It is important, indeed, but because it can no longer be taken for granted. This fact is as significant to the modernism of Cavell's criticism as the procedures of outlining the work of acknowledgment by a film of its medium once cinema has lost the powers of its conventions.

[4] A charting of the different actor-spectator relations in theater and cinema helps Cavell describe this quality of the movie spectator's unseen-ness and the film's independence from and indifference to us. But we can also imagine its radical independence of us through his remarks on the earlier modalities of filmgoing whereby you could walk into (or leave) the theater at any point in the film and so stay for as long as you fancied. The part of this which testifies to film's ontological indifference to us is one not entirely lost to us when we go to the movie theatre now. If you find yourselves the only spectator in the theater, and you decide to leave in the middle, it is perfectly possible for the film to carry on with no one present without any effect on how it plays out. Its temporal progression gives it the quality of a world that defines its conditions of change internally. This testifies to its absolute spatio-temporal independence of us, an independence arguably not found in any other art form.

[5] At this point, a question that may arise is that, if film manages to assert the existence of the world without us in it, does this not come at the cost of an annihilation of our sense of our own existence: if the world exists without us, where do we exist? We cannot say the movie theater, because the movie theater, as it is present to us, is not part of the world of any film. And if we find ourselves back in the world, then we are not relieved of it. The fact that a film's assertion of the world's existence independent of us does not negate our own existence will be found in the fact that for the duration of the film, we exist *within* the film without being able to act within it or even be addressed by it. This does not rule out our subjectivity's development in relation to it, as we respond to, without intervening in, what unfolds there. On our presence in the world of the film, compare Cavell (*World Viewed* 25-29 & 155-157) with Bazin ("Theater and Cinema" 95-124) whose work the former builds on. Although they place their emphases slightly differently, their arguments are based on the spatio-temporally exclusive character of a world. We exist either in the theater or in the world of the film; we can act within the former but not within the latter.

[6] Speaking of film theory in the first half of the twentieth century, the most significant early attempts at the institutionalization of the study of film in the United States and in France occurred in the context of the social sciences. Within the early academic context, theory of film, whether in (social-) scientific, practical or even sometimes in humanistic terms, was a significant component, but not criticism as an engagement with the hermeneutic and experiential value of specific films. One or the other of these theories may have called for criticism, but the sort of evaluative criticism that prepared the ground for Film Studies in the context of the humanities after World War II does not seem to have been a significant practice (Lowry; Polan). Professional film critics are a part of the economy of moviegoing so their alibi for criticism was the natural relation of their readers to films, even if their critical ambitions made some of them resentful critics for having to review anything that passed on the screen (*World Viewed* 6-7).

[7] Film theorists whose experience of cinema, like Cavell's, was formed in the classical context invariably knew better than to sneer at cinema's ability to answer to the fundamental wish for escape from the world, even when they sought to make this escape itself as a necessary route to reconnecting with the world on new terms. To stay with only Bazin, he affirmed this need on the eve of France's Liberation after World War II. During the Occupation, he says, French cinema had turned to fantastic or distant historical subjects because "[t[he public wanted the screen to be its window and not its mirror," not a window opening on to the world but out of it. He goes on to say that this demand for a dream world is unlikely to go away with the Liberation since people will continue to be oppressed, no longer by an occupying force but "by life itself" ("Reflection" 98). Bazin elaborates what he means by "life itself" in another essay he wrote during the Occupation years: "In our mechanical civilization where man is devoured by the technicality of his profession, normalized by social and political constraints, the cinema, beyond all artistic concerns, responds to the repressed but indefeasible collective psychic needs." ("Realist Esthetic" 36) On Cavell's formulation, these "collective psychic needs" are met by the classical cinema experience in a condition of privacy publicly granted.

[8] This has to be understood in its precision, since modernist works may incorporate the popular, but they thereby also bar engagement with the incorporated artefacts in habitual/popular ways.

[9] See also Cavell's remarks on the uncertainty of the audience within the university for the study of film at the time he was writing and expanding upon *The World Viewed*. (*World Viewed* xvi–xvii)

[10] On truthful and true statements, see *World Viewed* 157.

[11] "I interpret reading as a process of interpreting one's transference to (as opposed to one's projection onto) a text. That idea implies that the fantasy of a text's analyzing its reader is as much the guide of a certain ambition of reading— of philosophy as reading— as that of the reader's analyzing the text" (*Contesting* 113). Cavell here is speaking in analogy with the psychoanalytic procedure of transference and the possibility of the analyst's counter-transference to the analysand.

[12] See Cavell's remarks on the fact that the director (and so anyone involved in the making of the film) is maybe the first spectator of a film, but has no more authority over its import than later ones, and on the inadequacy of the idea of authorship as a way of understanding the identity of films (*Pursuits* 108; *World Viewed* 9).

[13] Cinephilia as this kind does not *emerge* after World War II. We find it in the avant-garde circles of the 1920s Paris, a small community gathering at the *Studio des ursulines*, but there it remains a rarefied phenomenon.

[14] To be clear, I am not saying that cinephilic criticism necessarily lacks arguments, but that its privileged mode is the isolation of transient moments. Compare this with Cavell's comments about reading of a film fragment versus fragmentary reading of a whole film, and criticism could transition from one to the other (*World Viewed* xiv).

[15] See also Bazin's "Eroticism and cinema".

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For nothing is concealed!
Motion picture, Wittgenstein, and *seeing-as*

THOMAS WACHTENDORF

Abstract: According to Wittgenstein's claim that our "seeing a thing as" is strongly dependent on what he calls "world-picture" and vice versa, motion pictures present "surveyable representations" of our world-picture and therefore influence the way we see the world. Insofar as *understanding* means to see coherences, motion pictures help humans understand world-pictures. But the insights imparted by motion pictures are not of a mere cognitive kind, since motion pictures do not present arguments. By making use of imaginative identification they have such an impact on humans that they directly "embody" insights and thereby changing what is accepted as knowledge within a world-picture.

Keywords: Wittgenstein, imaginative identification, world-picture, insights, epistemic value

It has become quite uncontroversial that motion pictures can impart knowledge. However, the interesting question is how they can do that and what kind of knowledge is meant here. This question is discussed at least since Stanley Cavell put the consideration of film on the philosophical agenda in 1971. For the insight that motion pictures do have an epistemic value of their own is quite not self-evident.

In analogy to Richard Rorty's *linguistic turn*, William Mitchell declared a *pictorial turn* in 1992 and after him Gottfried Boehm identified an *iconic turn* in 1994. Boehm´s main claim is that *Bilder* (the German word contains *pictures* as well as *images*) are a source of knowledge *sui generis* as well as true sentences are. If this is true, it is then also likely that motion pictures must have an epistemic value in their own right, even though motion pictures are different from pictures in some respects. While for instance a photograph stands for itself and can be interpreted as it is, a motion picture is not the totality of the individual photographs of which it consists. Also, an interpretation of each single photograph is not identical to the interpretation of the motion picture as a whole. The sense and meaning of a motion picture arises from its essential feature of being a *moving* picture that also usually includes a soundtrack. Nevertheless, leaving this undoubtably interesting, but in this case not crucial question unattended, Boehm's arguments will also work when applied to motion pictures. Boehm tries to show that pictures or motion pictures constitute and refer to a distinct realm of sense by formulating some arguments that focus on the phenomenon of showing (in the sense of *deixis*). If it could be proved that (a) *showing* can't be reduced to *saying* and that (b) showing constitutes sense, then *showing* would refer to such a *realm of sense*.

His first argument to promote (a) – (a1) – is that in order to constitute sense, *saying* — in the end — depends on a *deixis* (= showing). Therefore, the deixis cannot be reduced to saying. Otherwise a *circulus vitiosus* would be the result (Boehm *Wie Bilder Sinn Erzeugen: Die Macht Des Zeigens* 15).

The second argument in support of (a) – (a2) – aims at the relation between *word*, *reference* and *meaning*. This relation may be unclear sometimes or even problematic, but it is nevertheless distinct and so is language as a whole. By contrast, images always bear a *continuum* within themselves. Many aspects of an image, for example, are not *either-or*, but *as-well-as*. Therefore, images cannot be reduced to a class of sentences describing the images. Many of William Turner's paintings or Claude Monet's *Cathedral of Rouen* (1894) are good examples of such a continuum (Boehm *Wie Bilder Sinn Erzeugen: Die Macht Des Zeigens* 48-53).

Finally, that *showing* constitutes sense (b) mainly follows from the fact that today's world is fully depicted with far more pictures than subjects to be depicted. And as things do not prescribe the way they must be depicted, it is always up to the painter, photographer or director to decide how that will be done. Out of this difference between the thing (or the world in general) and its picture arises the picture's sense. This sense can be understood for now as the answer to the question as to *why* an author has made a certain picture or motion picture and why they did it in this specific way. *Showing* construes a realm of sense by showing how the world should be seen in a specific way according to a respective author (Boehm *Wie Bilder Sinn Erzeugen: Die Macht Des Zeigens* 43).

If these arguments are correct then motion pictures can be a source of knowledge *sui generis* with them referring to a realm of sense. This immediately leads to the aforementioned question of if and how they can impart knowledge. This question is best answered by looking at how knowledge is gained. In general, there are at least two attempts to explain this phenomenon: the classical theory of cognition and the embodied approach. Cognition understood in the classical way describes knowledge acquisition as a very definite process: "Cognition involves algorithmic processes upon symbolic representations" (Shapiro 2) which supposedly take place in the brain. According to this definition cognition takes place solely in the brain. It works simply by applying methods of logic (*algorithmic processes*) to concepts (*symbolic representations*). Cognition in this sense is a very technical process which depends on language. It is clear that this account runs into trouble when it comes to understanding motion pictures, because they constitute sense by showing which cannot in all cases be reduced to saying as we have just seen. From a cognitive point of view, motion pictures either have to be translated into language first (they have to be fully described, which is impossible according to a2) or it must be denied that they can be understood by the means of classical theory of cognition. Previously, both positions had their supporters.

By contrast, embodied cognition identifies the place where cognition takes place as occurring not only within the brain: "Whereas standard cognitive science puts the computational processes constituting the mind completely in the brain, [embodied cognition science claims that, T.W.] constituents of cognitive processes extend beyond the brain" (Shapiro 158). This position asserts that the whole body, with all of its senses, takes part in the process of cognition. Shapiro in general thinks that a deep interaction between perceiving and acting is the solid ground on which embodied cognition rests: "[E]mbodiment involves a deep connection between perception and action. [… Embodied, T.W.] Cognizers make their world, in some sense, as a result of activities that reflect the idiosyncrasies of their bodies and perceptual systems" (55).

Let's take a closer look at some cognitive processes which occur beyond the brain, residing in a deep connection between perceiving, acting and thinking. An example of such actions are gestures according to Shapiro: "Gesture, in at least some cases, seems bound to thought" (174). Shapiro supports this point by referring to a study that compared the participants' ability to explain a certain issue when some subjects were prevented from gesturing while other subjects were not. The subjects who weren't allowed to gesture had measurable difficulties in explaining the issue. So, in conclusion, gestures are not merely rhetorical, but rather carry (or convey) cognitive relevance (Shapiro 173). There are many more examples of how bodily movements or sensory impressions are constitutive, or at least supportive, of cognitive processes. For example, everybody knows the power of certain scents which sometimes evoke reminiscences of certain events or things which took place when first smelling that scent. It is not by chance that it is for a scent the protagonist of Marcel Proust's *Remembrance of Things past* is seeking.

At this point, it does appear that there are processes which occur beyond the brain, but which are nevertheless constitutive of cognition. So it seems that embodied cognition is the way forward when attempting to understand how motion pictures constitute sense and impart knowledge. With that given, the next question concerns how exactly motion pictures embody cognition. To answer that question, I will take a detour by looking more closely at the concepts of *metaphor* and *world-picture*.

In *Metaphors we live by*, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson pointed out that the "concepts that govern our thought are not just matters of the intellect. They also govern our everyday functioning, down to the most mundane details" (3). This means that beyond their rhetorical and poetical functions metaphors have both the ability to structure our relation to the world and at the same time illustrate fundamental cognitive structures.

Metaphors influence the way we *act*, the way we *think* and "contribute to the meaning of concepts" and thereby affect and expand our *understanding* of the world we live in (Shapiro 86-87). As such, metaphors are not exceptional cases within our conceptual system, but rather reside at its very core: "Primarily on the basis of linguistic evidence, we have found that most of our ordinary conceptual system is metaphorical in nature" (Lakoff and Johnson 4).

This result is of a very high interest since motion pictures and metaphors have one important feature in common: they reveal their sense not by asserting, but figuratively by *showing* and making use of pictures as substitute. As a consequence, motion pictures, so to speak, develop a real-life effect. This suggests the assumption that motion pictures have an impact on our conceptual system similar to that of metaphors. What that impact might be becomes more intelligible when examining what our *ordinary conceptual system* is and how it works. I will make use of Ludwig Wittgenstein's conception of language to show how concepts (and metaphors) come into existence and *govern* our everyday lives. Wittgenstein, if you will, advocates an embodied concept of *language*. His notion of a *language-game* binds language to actions. He says: "I shall also call the whole, consisting of language and the actions into which it is woven, the 'language-game'" (*Philosophical Investigations* §7). Consequently, speaking is not only a mental process. Wittgenstein rather stresses "the fact that the *speaking* of language is part of an activity" (*Philosophical Investigations* §23). He draws this analogy between language and games, because both have more in common than is visible at first sight. Taking a closer look at games helps us to understand some crucial aspects of language. As with games, the rules of how to speak a language are also dependent on the actions to which they are connected.

To emphasize this point Wittgenstein uses a rhetorical question. He asks "is there not also the case where we play and make up the rules as we go along? And there is even one where we alter them—as we go along" (*Philosophical Investigations* §83). So, concepts and rules are dependent on what we do. They arise *as we go along*.

Such a conception of language has different consequences. One of those affects the notion of *meaning*. If speaking is bound to action then so, too, is the meaning of a word. Indeed Wittgenstein claims that: "For a *large* class of cases—though not for all—in which we employ the word 'meaning' it can be defined thus: the meaning of a word is its use in the language" (*Philosophical Investigations* §43). Therefore, the way a word is used is influenced by the way we act. The way we act is again among others influenced by our experience.

Finally, the last confirmation of a word's meaning lies not in its somewhat obscure relation to the world, but in acting which in turn "lies at the bottom of the language- game" (Wittgenstein *On Certainty* §204). So, it is at the bottom of our language-games where we attach meaning as well to some words (when we name something, for example) and others get their meaning through their being involved in actions; it is therefore at the bottom of a language-game where "the explanations come to an end" (Wittgenstein *Philosophical Investigations* §1) and whereon our certainties rest. There is no deeper foundation of explanations or meanings than the connection of acting and speaking at the bottom of a language game which, likewise, is the last stance of justification. There, at the bottom of a language-game, "[i]f I have exhausted the justifications I have reached bedrock, and my spade is turned. Then I am inclined to say: 'This is simply what I do.'" (Wittgenstein *Philosophical Investigations* §217).

Wittgenstein later notes the consequence he draws out of his conception of language-games: "At the foundation of well-founded belief lies belief that is not founded" (*On Certainty* §253). That means that there will always be assumptions which cannot be proven right, because to do

so, other assumptions which have already been proven as true would be necessary on which this proof could rest and so on ad infinitum. From this point of view it sounds absurd to demand a set of true propositions from which all other true propositions could be derived as a foundation of science or of everyday life.

Once the mentioned set of true propositions cannot take over the role as a solid and reliable foundation of knowledge (as such a set of propositions does not exist), assumptions do instead. These assumptions involve propositions about things one has been told, read, heard, but altogether not proved right. "That is to say, the *questions* that we raise and our *doubts* depend on the fact that some propositions are exempt from doubt, are as it were like hinges on which those turn" (Wittgenstein *On Certainty* §341). These assumptions seem to us to be so certain that further investigations into their being true or false do not seem necessary or simply are not undertaken. "That is to say, it belongs to the logic of our scientific investigations that certain things are *in deed* not doubted" (Wittgenstein *On Certainty* §342). Everyone believes such propositions about the world they have not verified by themselves. And some of these beliefs necessarily cannot be doubted, because something must stand firm so that another can move. They are the *hinges* that make the question of right or wrong become possible in the first place.

In their entirety, these assumptions constitute a deep belief and they form our picture of the world, or our *world-picture*. "But I did not get my picture of the world by satisfying myself of its correctness; nor do I have it because I am satisfied of its correctness. No: it is the inherited background against which I distinguish between true and false" (Wittgenstein *On Certainty* §94) One is adopted to its world-picture by taking part (and being a part of) primitive language games, e.g. such language games in which one learns to use the language. The language-game is *the* ultimate plain fact, the ground everyone stands upon, but it is itself, however, "not based on grounds. It is not reasonable (or unreasonable). It is there – like our life" (Wittgenstein *On Certainty* §559).

It is important to notice that our world-picture rests on a nest of ungrounded beliefs and is subject to constant change depending on our acting and speaking. And although these propositions I have adopted and which I am acquainted to – the ungrounded belief as well as the grounded belief upon which our world-picture is founded – are derived from the world in a very broad sense, on the other hand they strongly influence the way I see the world.

Wittgenstein demonstrates this close dependence between a world-picture and the way one sees the world with an argument developed in the second part of the *Philosophical Investigations*. He there presents what he calls the *duckrabbit* (figure 1), a figure which can be seen either as a head of a rabbit or a duck. The aspects one is capable of seeing depend on the existence of a corresponding concept within a particular world-picture, meaning that one only sees them "if you are already conversant with the shapes of those two animals" (*Philosophical Investigations* ii, XI 207). Wittgenstein calls "this experience 'noticing an aspect'" (*Philosophical Investigations* ii, XI 193) and stresses its close relation to world-pictures from where concepts originate depending on the language-games. This once again makes clear the close dependence between language-games, world-pictures and seeing-as.
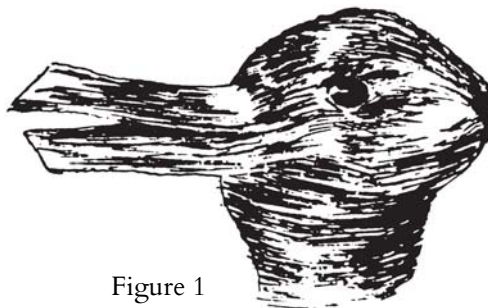

Figure 1

There is something special worth realizing about *seeing an aspect*. Wittgenstein argues that it is not solely a visual experience one has when noticing the flashing of an aspect. In fact "the flashing of an aspect on us seems half visual experience, half thought" (*Philosophical Investigations* ii, XI 197). This is because we have influence on how we see the duckrabbit and similar illustrations. We perceive the same "[b]ut we can also see the illustration now as one thing now as another. — So we interpret it, and *see* it as we *interpret* it" (*Philosophical Investigations* ii, XI 193). This is a very important point, paving the way for an embodied concept of seeing. We do not *perceive* the world, but *see* it by interpreting what we perceive according to our world- picture. Only interpretation leads to the seeing of an aspect. Interpretation, now, is an action, interpreting is acting. "Do I really see something different each time, or do I only interpret what I see in a different way? I am inclined to say the former. But why?—To interpret is to think, to do something; seeing is a state", Wittgenstein says (*Philosophical Investigations* ii, XI 212).

Now we have found the link we were looking for. We were concerned with two questions; how a world-picture influences the way we see the world and, conversely, how our seeing the world influences our world-picture. The answer to the first question is that we have to be conversant with things in order to see them. Broadly speaking, we can only see what is part of our world-picture. But, and this answers the second question, if we *learn* to see things we did not know before we thereby learn to interpret those things as *those things*. As interpreting is acting and acting lies at the bottom of our language game (and thereby changing it), interpreting things in a different or new way shifts our set of undoubted beliefs and, as a consequence, changes our world-picture. This way, the "riverbed of thoughts" (Wittgenstein *On Certainty* §97) – which is the set of undoubted beliefs which is founding our world-picture – changes over time: "And the bank of that river consists partly of hard rock, subject to no alteration or only to an imperceptible one, partly of sand, which now in one place now in another gets washed away, or deposited" (Wittgenstein *On Certainty* §99).

With this said we can conclude this excursion into the philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein and return to the original topic. We have already seen how pictures and metaphors influence one's world-picture (and as a result one's action). The subsequent question, now, is how motion pictures could impart knowledge by changing world-pictures. The thesis in question is that this becomes possible because a director (understood as the creative head of a team) has acquired a certain way to see the world and he now – similar to an artist presenting his art – is promoting this world-picture via his motion-picture. In doing so he might aim to change a certain world-picture which in his eyes might be flawed. He, then, can with his motion picture give us a kind of *transformation guidance* from one world-picture to another so that we can see the world the way he wants us to. It is in this sense a motion picture imparts knowledge by making us see the world in a different way and thereby — as a consequence — acquire new knowledge.

To construe such a transformation guidance a director needs both a solid knowledge of the world as it is and a vision of how the world should be seen. This comprehension of the world as it is arises out of the comprehension of what I will call *the artefact's histories of sense*. In intentional contexts *artefacts* (as well as *concepts*) respond to a certain problem, so to speak.

For example, a hammer looks the way it does because it was made to solve (among others) the problem of hitting a nail into a wall. There are not unlimited possible ways to reach this goal. So, the hammer's shape, material and so on is not *accidentally*, but thoroughly considered. The hammer is constructed to solve a certain problem. It is tested and, depending on its success, perhaps improved. Maybe it is discovered that even other problems can be solved with this hammer, maybe usage of the hammer causes new problems to which new solutions are necessary. Anyway, all the single artefacts constructed to solve a problem belong to the problem's history. Now, even this simple example shows that in order to understand a problem, one must understand the problem's history as well as the history of the attempts to solve this problem. Each of the single

attempts to solve a problem, then, is the answer to the question of its particular sense. The consequential result is a history of sense which constitutes an artefact's sense. Michel Foucault made this method to understand a concept known e.g. in his famous studies *The Order of Things*, or *Discipline and Punish*. There is again a connection to the philosophy of Wittgenstein at this point. Our failure to understand, he says, springs from our lack of an overview of the use of our words:

> A main source of our failure to understand is that we don't have an overview of the use of our words. – Our grammar is deficient in surveyability. A surveyable representation produces precisely that kind of understanding which consists in "seeing connections". Hence the importance of finding and inventing intermediate links. The concept of a surveyable representation is of fundamental significance for us. It characterizes the way we represent things, how we look at matters. (Is this a *Weltanschauung*?) (*Philosophical Investigations* §122)

To be able to understand we must gain a — as he calls it — *surveyable representation* of our grammar – the use of our words (whereas *grammar* here designates the rules for using our words and does not refer to syntax). Wittgenstein stresses not only the need of surveyability, but also the importance of finding connections between the words as well as finding intermediate cases. And although he is speaking about language, Wittgenstein uses terms descending from the semantic field of seeing like *overview*, *seeing*, *looking at matters*. This is not by chance. Wittgenstein thereby wants to hint at the close relation between seeing and speaking. That at the same time makes it tricky to translate the German passage into English. While Anscombe translated "übersichtliche Darstellung" to "perspicuous representation", Hacker used "surveyable" to attribute the specific kind of representation. The final word on the question of which translation is the correct one has yet to be given and, of course, cannot be done here.

Whereas de Mesel combines both translations by using them synonymously and apparently sees no problem in confusing them that way, Savickey by contrast does. Savickey claims that Hacker's concept of surveyability tries to aim at an attempt to tabulate grammar — and nothing more. But this, she argues, would not cope with the complexity of Wittgenstein's idea behind this concept of "fundamental significance". But nevertheless — while agreeing with Savickey's interpretation of this topic in general —, de Mesel proposes an interpretation of "surveyable representation" that seems most suitable to translate to the German word "Übersicht". He says:

> I agree with the later Baker's critique, shared by Kuusela, that a surveyable representation need not be an assemblage of grammatical rules, as the Baker- Hacker interpretation [that Savickey criticised, T.W.] claims. There are several techniques for introducing perspicuity into the use of our words. (48)

One of these manifold techniques "is to compare the use of certain words to the use of others. By way of similes and analogies, Wittgenstein often tries to break the spell of a certain analogy that 'held us captive' (PI 115)" (De Mesel 48).

In this sense "surveyable" means more than just *overlooking* things perspicuously to get a tabulation of grammar or clarity of expression. A surveyable representation enables one to understand world-pictures and to obtain the ability to find the way through them. Schroeder in this sense suggests "synoptic representation" as the most appropriate translation which focuses on both aspects of a synopsis: overlooking and orientation. Briefly, I think Wittgenstein's point is to make clear that there are always several world-pictures which we are each able to understand if we try to overlook the use of our words and if we – on this grounds – search for connections (and differences) within each world-picture and also between them. Overlooking is of course more than just tabulating grammar. It is the necessary condition to being able to see connections and missing intermediate cases. A surveyable representation will bring us into a good position to be able to *understand*. In this expanded sense *surveyable representation* can be interpreted as a source of information about artefact's histories of sense. What we must do is *seeing-to-understand*. The artefact's histories of sense help us in doing so. This, again, brings us back to motion picture.

Motion pictures use spoken words, pictures and music of all kinds and, by combining these, it has a strong and very special impact on the audience. The audience literally see the missing links between our words, our concepts and also the different world-pictures — they see the *connections* Wittgenstein speaks of which helps them to gain a surveyable representation. Motion pictures do this by presenting developed world-pictures and by making the audience learn about these world-pictures the way they learn the language through primitive language-games. A motion picture produces missing intermediate cases in a way that directly affects the audience. In fact, motion pictures do have a very high impact. This is because when watching a motion picture specific ways of acting are presented to the audience. Acting, though, lies at the bottom of the language-game and hence at the bottom of our language. Moreover, as we have seen, *interpreting* is *acting* and therefore lies at the bottom of the language-game, too. Taken together, this explains how motion pictures manage to influence the way its audience interpret and see the world. Furthermore, by watching specific ways of acting one also learns them as well as new ways of speaking (about them) – one learns to see new connections. On the one hand this leads to a better understanding of the world, but also influences the world by changing the way we see it as (our *Weltanschauung* changes). Altogether, motion pictures – so to speak – *make us feel* what a certain *world-picture* is like. They give us insights into those world-pictures, by making us feel as if we were actually in a certain situation. We, when watching a motion picture, imagine to be that person on the screen in that given situation. By identifying with this person and at the same time by ascribing those states of affairs to others we know from ourselves we become able to – to a certain degree – *feel* what the protagonists feel.

The reason for this is that there seems to be some kind of a parallelism between a subject and the world insofar we tend to assume how others feel by bringing to mind how we would feel in that specific situation. "This parallelism, then, really exists between my spirit, i.e. spirit, and the world", Wittgenstein says and concludes: "If I were to look like the snake and to do what it does then I should be such-and- such" (*Notebooks* 15.10.16).

This kind of process of embodied cognition is called *imaginative identification* and it is the reason for us weeping when observing a sad situation in spite of not being directly involved in or affected by what is happening.

Insofar as a motion picture rests on its director's interpretation of the world, then, at the same time it implicitly holds a way how the world – from this director's specific point of view – *should* be seen. This interpretation, then, likewise develops a view of a future world. And as you *cannot record fiction* it *presents* a possible world (see also Wiesing). A motion picture expresses the director's interpretation of the world and this is what is meant by saying that a motion picture bears knowledge. This knowledge is the grounded world-picture acquired by a director. The director is, so to speak, the motion picture's knowledge-knowing subject. He must consequently be understood as an author who is presenting his or her insights to the audience. The director's interpretation of the world also becomes morally relevant, then, because it gives *insights* into a world-picture, thereby changing the world by stating how the world *should* be, and by teaching us to see it that way. This, as a side note, is what Wittgenstein thinks philosophers should do in order to change world-pictures – they should simply say: "Look at things like this!" (*Culture and Value* 61e), thereby teaching others to *see*. It is the director who helps the audience to see connections and find the intermediate links. We simply must look at the world and describe what we see. We need to gain a surveyable representation and to get to know the artefact's histories of sense in order to be able to understand. Motion pictures can help us in doing so, because they are precisely made to be seen and they present world-pictures to the audience — "For nothing is concealed" (Wittgenstein *Philosophical Investigations* 435).

Universität Oldenburg, Germany

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Engaging Husserl's Theory of Meaning for the Philosophy of Film and Motion Pictures

SHAWN LOHT

Introduction

This article aims to engage Edmund Husserl's theory of meaning in *Logical Investigations*[1] in order to highlight some phenomenological dimensions of the question of meaning in the images of film and motion pictures. A related aim is to engage Husserl's theory of meaning for the purpose of illuminating the particular kind of intentionality involved in viewing film and motion pictures. In what follows, I want to suggest that Husserl's account of meaning has bearing both for meaning considered as an immanent feature of cinematic images or shots as such, and for the cumulative meaning that is generated by the editing of cinematic images into a work as a whole. In adopting a phenomenological approach, by discussing meaning and intentionality, I want to open up space to recast some of the classical thought in this debate into terms that describe film viewing explicitly from first-person experience. I want to highlight the occurrence of meaning in film images insofar as this is a subjectively experienced, cognitive, epistemic phenomenon. To clarify some of the terms I will be employing, by "film and motion pictures" and "cinema" and the "cinematic," I refer broadly to these following Carroll's taxonomy of "motion pictures."[2] However, I will be considering film and motion pictures with special emphasis on their constitution in shots and in works whose makeup consists in the editing together of shots. By the notion of "meaning," I follow Husserl in describing this concept according to the highest degree of generality. From a phenomenological standpoint, this entails describing meaning insofar as it comprises a feature of intentional consciousness, through which objects and states of affairs are intelligibly present. Therefore, in terms of discussing meaning in the images of film and motion pictures, my interest is not to take up particular kinds of meaning we often find in these media (e.g. constructed, referential, symbolic, cultural, etc.), but instead to engage Husserl's phenomenology of meaning as it comprises a foundation for notions of meaning in film and motion pictures as such. While a small body of scholarship has explored the relevance of Husserl's philosophy for the philosophy of film – most notably, the work of Allan Casebier[3] – the present work will add to this scholarship by concentrating on themes in Husserl's early work, predating his turn with *Ideas* toward idealism and transcendental phenomenology. The present work will also contribute to scholarship on Husserl's thought regarding "image consciousness" and "phantasy" by virtue of connecting this material to his earlier work in the *Investigations*.

What does Husserl Mean by "Meaning"?

The first of Husserl's six Logical Investigations illustrates the concept of meaning by examining its role in expression. On one hand, expressions have their seat in the words that carry them. A word can be merely "a verbal sound infused with sense," as Husserl puts it (*LI*, 281). This feature is exemplified with any word I can say aloud, such as "fire." "Fire" can just be a word I say without further implication. On the other hand, the mere words in an expression typically possess a phenomenological unity with the intuitive referent, or objective correlate, to which the expression corresponds. This is to say, the words are bound up with *what* they have to

communicate, where that *what* is usually something in the world that we can intuitively behold, or else something we can envision through imagination. "Meaning" here describes the mental act in which the word "fire" is linked to its intuitive referent, such as when a cook in a restaurant kitchen yells "Fire! Fire!" to alert the fellow staff that a fire is burning. As Husserl describes this phenomenon, "the expression is more than a merely sounded word. It *means* something, and insofar as it means something, it relates to what is objective" (*LI*, 280). Accordingly, Husserl describes the phenomenon of meaning in a twofold guise. "Meaning-intention" refers to an expression one makes with *mere* meaning, when the object is not before one, when it can only be understood schematically, as it were.[4] Whereas "meaning-fulfillment" names the act in which the object of the original expression is confirmed or illustrated (*LI*, 281). Overall, the crux of this distinction is that meaning is not a totally mental phenomenon. It does not simply live at the level of thought or expressed words; in its fullest form, meaning resides in the experience by which the meaning initially conferred in the expression is fulfilled, by the presence of the intended object or state of affairs. Nor is meaning simply read off of objects; rather, meaning is the "act" whereby the object of our meaning-intention becomes present to us as what it is (*LI*, 283). Thus, in the example from a restaurant kitchen, the kitchen staff experience the meaning conveyed by the shouts of "Fire!" by stopping what they are doing and looking up to see flames shooting from a frying vat, cognizing that there is indeed a fire.

   Although Husserl's entry point into describing meaning focuses on meaning in expressions, in Investigation Six he observes the broader scope in which meaning can refer to any experience of intentionality mediating presence and absence. For intentionality can be imaginative, such that intentional states are often minded toward what is not present but still thought. The role of imagination was implicit in the discussion above, as one can have an intention that seeks fulfillment based on the immanent meaning of an expression, as in our example of someone nearby yelling "fire!" I may imaginatively envision a fire even though I have not discerned where it is. Alternately, my intentional state may be such that I imagine an absent object or state of affairs based simply on what is present to me. For example, if I am hiking through deep woods and low on water, the sound of a stream will likely cause me to imagine water nearby. In cases such as these, my meaning-intention is imaginative rather than "signitive" (*LI*, 669). Indeed, there need not be any signitive or verbal expression embedded in my meaning-intention. My meaning-intention that is imaginatively minded toward water can be correspondingly fulfilled if I do discover a running stream. Should I indeed discover the stream, an act of recognition occurs by which my imaginative picturing of water becomes united with the actual presence of water (*LI*, 689). My meaning-intention is intuitively fulfilled; I have before me what I was intentionally minding in its absence (*LI*, 694). On this phenomenon of my imaginative intention receiving fulfillment through the presence of my sought object, Husserl remarks "Talk about recognizing objects, and talk about fulfilling a meaning-intention, therefore express the same fact" (*LI*, 695). Or, as J.N. Mohanty observes, of particular note here is meaning-fulfillment seen as the foundation for knowledge. For knowledge originates not just in outward-directed thinking about something, but in apprehension of the object in its presence, in Husserl's locution, "meaning-fulfillment."[5]

   The phenomenon I wish to highlight at this juncture lay in Husserl's observation that intentions, broadly construed, "provide the basis for relations of fulfillment" (*LI*, 699). In other words, it is inherent to intentional states to lay out their own conditions of fulfillment.[6] For instance, when I hear someone shout "fire!" the meaning-intention I experience through the exclamation seeks the conditions that will fulfill it. In such a case the fulfillment will be seeing flames burning as I am accustomed to see when a fire is present. As Rudolf Bernet observes on this score, a meaning-intention's relation to its fulfillment has a character of desire, not in the sense of wanting to possess the object, but to know it, by virtue of having it before one. Moreover, given that "complete" intuitive presence of an object is never possible, such having of an object is necessarily

an ideal.[7] On this note, Husserl observes that intentions that seek fulfillment can do so in an indefinite way, such that the potential fulfillment can be satisfied by a range of intuitive contents, so long as these enable a recognition of what one's intention sought (*LI*, 700). There are many instantiations of fire that can intuitively fulfill my meaning-intention of a fire occurring, as there are multiple ways my imaginative intention of a stream during hiking can be fulfilled. Nonetheless, it still remains the case that intentions predetermine their conditions of fulfillment.[8]

Husserl's account of the relationship between meaning and intentionality comes to a climax with the observation that this framework by and large characterizes perceptual, intentional experience as such.[9] He writes: "All perceiving and imagining is, on our view, a web of partial intentions" through which a unity of total intention is fused together, where "[t]he correlate of this last intention is the thing, while the correlate of its partial intentions are *the thing's parts and aspects*" (*LI*, 701). Perception and imagination have the character of being incomplete. They typically comprise intentions that are partially filled, and which anticipate yet other partial intentions that may furnish some fulfillment in turn.[10] A classical way of describing this phenomenon is the observation that we can never see the "back" of an object, like a building, when facing it from the front.[11] Rather, to see the back of a building, we must walk behind it, at which point we can no longer see the front. Furthermore, while perception and imagination are inherently acts that reach beyond themselves, toward both what is intuitively present and what is not, respectively, they are also additive and serial, often comprising in piecemeal fashion an intentional comprehension of a larger thing or a state of affairs. If I walk around the perimeter of a building I am seeing for the first time, my intentional comprehension of it in total will be additive and piecemeal in this way. And as I proceed, much of my vision of the building may still remain imaginative. For instance, if I try to imagine what it looks like inside (suppose it is an historic mansion), I may be able to formulate a mental picture of the interior layout from the constraints of the exterior design, or by looking through windows, but other aspects will remain unknown to me. In sum, my total intention is aimed toward the building itself, but this total intention is a product of multiple, partial intentions of the various components that comprise the building. To be sure, not all perceptual and imaginative states are this robust, as intentional states can often be static and lifeless, such as when I am falling asleep and blankly staring at the ceiling. In contrast, Husserl remarks, the more robust phenomenon of multiple partial intentions geared toward an overall object is typically occasioned when perception is "in flux, when it is spread out into a continuous series of percepts" (*LI*, 701).

Returning to Husserl's thesis on meaning as it pertains to these phenomena, the takeaway is that meaning is embodied in the beyond-reaching aspect of intentional consciousness by which one is minded toward things with an expectancy or anticipation of fulfillment. Meaning does not consist in the bare state of perception ("[p]erception is an act which determines but does not embody meaning" (*LI*, 684)), or merely in thought, but rather in the connection between meaning-intention and meaning-fulfillment, where one is able to make present what was intentionally absent. As Husserl crucially summarizes, the claim that all perceiving and imagining consist of a web of partial intentions illustrates how consciousness can "mean beyond itself" and have its meaning be fulfilled (*LI*, 701). Meaning lay in the interplay of the fulfilment-seeking and fulfillment- finding character of intentional consciousness as such.

In what follows, my overall goal is to highlight the way Husserl's account of meaning as centered in intentional consciousness underpins the experience of meaning in the viewing of film and motion pictures. Before getting to this topic, I wish to highlight some elements of what Husserl terms "image consciousness" in order to clarify how he envisions the peculiar sort of intentionality that characterizes the perception of pictures, photographs, and cinematic images. This side analysis will enable us to comprehend in more detail, in the framework sketched by the *Investigations*, the experience of meaning that is occasioned in the viewing of film and motion pictures.

Husserl on Image Consciousness

Husserl's various writings on image consciousness are collected in Volume XXIII of the collected works (*Husserliana*), published in English translation under the title *Phantasy, Image Consciousness, and Memory*.[12] Composed sporadically throughout Husserl's career, and consisting of lecture notes and unpublished studies, these texts do not comprise a unified view by any means; rather, they are perhaps best understood as different, complementary investigations of the phenomenology involved with the perception of images and pictures, and more broadly, the phenomenology of imagination. And although these writings span multiple decades, from both prior to the *Logical Investigations* and well after, I believe the main contours of Husserl's work on image consciousness are compatible with the positions laid out in the *Investigations* pertaining to the interplay of intentionality, intuition, imagination, and meaning. Where the *Investigations* describe basic features of intentional consciousness in very high degrees of generality, the writings on image consciousness simply explore a particular kind of intentionality. This last point echoes a view Husserl voices throughout his career, namely, that for every region and type of experience, there is a unique structure of intentional consciousness.[13]

By the term "image consciousness," Husserl simply means the capacity for seeing images. He understands it similarly to the concept of *phantasia* (commonly called "imagination") in Aristotle, where this faculty enables one to represent absent objects via images. Image consciousness for Husserl can take place through either physically present images, for which Husserl reserves the term "image consciousness" proper, or through "phantasy," the capacity for seeing images conjured through one's own imagination. Memory is a related phenomenon, as memory comprises the reproduction of previously experienced events in the form of images.

Decisive in Husserl's early writings on image consciousness, circa 1904-05, is the topic of the *constitution* of images, that is, the multi-leveled cognitive structure underlying the perception of images (*PICM*, 19-20 [18]). In this account, the constitution of images consists of three perceptual moments: the physical image, the image object, and the image subject (*PICM*, 21 [19]). The *physical image* is the material foundation, the physical thing in which the image occurs. In a painting, the physical image would be the canvas, pigment, and other physical media comprising the piece. The *image object* lay in the shapes, lines, or other visual cues that bear resemblance to a subject the viewer can recognize. A painted portrait will for instance contain outlines, contrasts of light and dark, and so forth, arranged in a way that conveys to the viewer similarity to a person's visage. Finally, the *image subject* is the matter of depiction, whatever is meant in the presentation (*PICM*, 19 [18]). Husserl specifies that one sees the image subject *in* the image object, where the image object allows one to behold the image subject intentionally (*PICM* 20, [18]). Accordingly, if I view a portrait of ex. Marcel Proust, while the visual features of the portrait, as image object, present to me a resemblance of Proust, it is as the image subject that I actually intend Proust the man.

A crucial feature of image consciousness for Husserl is the conflictual mediation occasioned in the tripartite structure of image constitution. The portrait I view in the museum is not merely a physical thing, but also contains an image object, in a fashion that these two dimensions are in tension without negating each other. I constitute the image object intentionally; it is an ideal object, different from the physical thing in which it occurs.[14] There are thus two different perceptual apprehensions, the first of something physically present, and the second a perception of an image object I know not to be present.[15] A second conflict lay in the fact that, as Husserl maintains, image objects do not *exist*; they are constituted with "the characteristic of unreality" (*PICM*, 51 [47]). Image objects are actually nothing more than the material in which they occur. Husserl describes that whereas image objects certainly appear, grounding the image subject's appearance *in* the image, image objects are an appearance of "a not now *in the now*" (*Ibid*.). As a result, image objects are not part of the real but instead are meant intentionally.[16] A third conflict distinguishes

the image object and the image subject. While the image object yields only one appearance, the viewing thereof involves two distinct apprehensions: an apprehension of a likeness, and one of the actual subject depicted (*PICM*, 29 [30-31]). Husserl observes the qualification that these two dimensions are inherent to image consciousness; we do not have an image if it does not both occasion the apprehension of resemblance *and* the apprehension of a subject.

Another theme Husserl treats in these writings that is of interest for our purpose is the character of *presence* or *reality* the subjects of images bear, where the subject seems to be directly before one. For example, if I were acquainted with Marcel Proust in real life, I might say that this portrait really captures his essence, or that it is *him*. A crucial qualifier of Husserl's later accounts of image consciousness, circa 1912 and onward, is the *attitude* in which the viewer regards the image subject's existence. In this account, image subjects can be viewed "positionally" or "nonpositionally." Husserl observes that every intentional state is positional or nonpositional in its comportment toward its object (*PICM*, 430-31 [358-59]). One either apprehends the subject while also positing its existence, or else one views the subject in a "neutralized," non-judging stance toward its existence. For instance, when I look at a photograph of my son and notice his freckles or the crack in his smile, my intentional consciousness of him and of these features is positional. I am comported toward him insofar as he exists. Whereas my viewing the picture of a fictionalized Prince Hamlet on the cover of my Arden Shakespeare copy of *Hamlet* includes a nonpositional intention of the image subject Hamlet. I am minded toward Hamlet while abstaining from a judgment on whether he exists. Nonetheless, regarding image subjects perceived in the nonpositional attitude, Husserl observes that one's judgments about these image subjects also still hold good when they remain under the governance of this original attitude. One can still comport oneself toward fictional and thus nonposited image subjects and states of affairs as if they are actual within the intentional nexus in which they appear (*PICM*, 486 [413], 537 [452]). One can make sense of the contents of images just as one does with those in real life (*PICM*, 554 [465-66]). For instance, if I view the painting "Nighthawks" by Edward Hopper – a painting that depicts individuals sitting around a late-night bar in an urban streetscape – I can make defensible judgments about who these people are, their backgrounds, what they are eating and drinking, and what they are talking or thinking about, just as I would in a real-life instance of watching such a scene. The difference in my intentionality toward the scene in the painting versus a real scene is that my overall attitude in viewing the painting's subject is nonpositional.

Perhaps the most robust formulation of Husserl's that speaks to our present interest occurs in Husserl's writings on image consciousness circa 1917-18. In this later work, Husserl eschews image consciousness in terms of representation, focusing instead on the occurrences in which image consciousness can take the form of "perceptual phantasy" or "immediate imagination." Yet, the paradoxical nature of this locution reflects the cognitive tension with which Husserl still understands image consciousness in this mature view.[17] In perceptual phantasy, one directly perceives entities in a fashion such that their outward, phantastical look is *self-constituted*. Perceptual phantasy is thus a mode where the image subject readily presents itself in a phantastic guise, without additional contribution on the viewer's part. Imagination is thus "immediate."[18] An exemplar instance for Husserl is theatrical performance. The viewer of a stage play does not view it through representative image consciousness, as if the actual characters and events were happening somewhere else, with the stage players, set, and props merely representing the actual ones. Perceptual phantasy is an intentional mode in which one perceives the image subjects, for instance Prince Hamlet and his mother Gertrude, in an "as if" attitude. Or as Husserl puts it in these later texts, I "quasi-perceive" them; I do not look at the actor and hold that he "represents" or "depicts" the true Hamlet. Husserl comments that in the case of theatrical performance, we enter a *world* of perceptual phantasy (*PICM*, 616 [514-15]). The presentative, illusory aspect of the play is temporarily concealed, while a self-constituting productivity emerges. This state of perceptual

phantasy is possible precisely because we can take the entire image world as "null," as annulled with respect to reality (*PICM,* 618 [516]). An upshot of this later account regarding perceptual phantasy in distinction to the earlier account of the positionality or nonpositionality of the viewer's attitude is that the former emphasizes the immersive, world-fostering character of certain instantiations of image consciousness. It illuminates the aspect of some encounters with art that enact self-creating worlds, where the actual world disappears for a time and the immediately imagined world becomes seemingly real unto itself. Similarly, the account of perceptual phantasy also speaks to the relative disappearance of the *medium* in which images appear, where the image subject and its world appear as if they are directly before us. Regarded as "immediate imagination," the phenomenon of perceptual phantasy occurs without explicit mediation between the vehicle housing the image subject, and the image subject itself.

In the next section, I return to discussing Husserl's account of meaning and intentionality, particularly as these pertain to the meaning bound up with the images of film and motion pictures. Before transitioning to that discussion, I want to highlight some key points of relevance for the philosophy of film and motion pictures that are borne out of Husserl's various accounts of image consciousness. Looking at his earliest material on this subject, it is persuasive that the tripartite model of physical image–image object–image subject comfortably applies to the images afforded by film and motion pictures. For these media consist of a physical image, in the materiality of the screen or surface upon which cinematic images appear. The "image objects" of film and motion pictures, namely, the arrangements of light and color appearing on a two-dimensional surface situated in my spatiotemporal proximity, clearly occasion resemblance to things known in real life. And perhaps most crucially, the "image subjects" of film and motion pictures (such as people and places) clearly rely on the viewer's seeing them "in" the image objects. Thus, I become intentionally comported toward New York's Empire State Building, qua image subject, when I see it "in" the image object fostered by the familiar outline of the building in Andy Warhol's *Empire*. In general, the takeaway point is that I can intentionally behold the image subject in a film as this or that object, person, etc., by virtue of this phenomenological dimension of intentional experience. Just as it is a phenomenological feature of image consciousness for one to be able to see an image subject through the vehicle of a resembling, guiding image object, it is likewise salient to hold that the intentional consciousness afforded by films and motion pictures grants seeing one thing through another.[19] One might contrast this to theses of photographic "transparency" or "realism" according to which viewing the image subject of a film equates to seeing the actual thing. In the light I have discussed here, rather, at issue is a type of intentionality directed toward the object in its absence[20] – a species of meaning-intention in the vocabulary of the *Logical Investigations* – making it present to thought amidst the awareness that it is not present.

Husserl's later accounts of image consciousness in terms of positionality and nonpositionality, and "perceptual phantasy" or "immediate imagination," in contrast, are important for my present purpose in a different way. Foremost of interest in this material for the philosophy of film and motion pictures is the dimension in which these media exemplify the human ability to engage in perception that takes the perceived subjects as real, or which otherwise regards these as real in the imaginative world where they exist. Fictional film and television media particularly benefit from this aspect of Husserlian image consciousness by virtue of their ability to convey immersive worlds that unfold in a self-generating guise, in which the people and places depicted appear to be real and hermeneutically consistent with the actual world. And when cinematic media present entities, ideas, and the like that are patently unreal or nonexistent (as in e.g. fantasy series such as *Game of Thrones* (various directors, 2011–2019)), we are able to continue meaningful viewing with the questionable or doubted existences as annulled with respect to reality. Especially in viewing fictional cinema, we often do not stop to make an explicit judgment on whether the matter of depiction exist; we simply perceive what is in front of us automatically, bracketing

questions about the reality of what we are seeing. Our imagination works immediately. Likewise, the experience of viewing film and motion pictures is such that *we do not typically stop to behold* the conflictual, tripartite dimension of our image consciousness Husserl describes in his earlier work, though such consciousness is inevitably at work from a cognitive standpoint.

With all of these parallels in mind, one still might ask about the particular kind of intentionality that underlies viewing film and motion pictures. What specifically differentiates the images of film and motion pictures from the general types of images Husserl groups under image consciousness? While Husserl gives little for us to go on in terms of comprehending how he might describe the image consciousness involved specifically with film and motion pictures, there are some items we can look to for clues. Following John Brough, it seems safe to assume that Husserl envisions the images of film to be largely coextensive with everyday audiovisual perception, but with the qualification that film images are specifically regarded in an as–if, phantastical attitude.[21] In this guise, to behold something in a film is in large part to behold it perceptually, as if it were really in front of one, within the audiovisual confines a film allows, albeit with the equal qualification that one knows one is viewing a film image.[22] Thus, the intentionality of film viewing involves perception, but is not simply perception.[23] Yet the sensory content of cinematic images is similar to and derivative from the sensory content of ordinary perception.[24] One's perception of the content of cinematic images still involves the consitutions of objects in analogous fashion to audiovisual object constitution in real life.[25] Similarly, in the passages where Husserl himself speaks most explicitly regarding the makeup of film or motion pictures, the overall thrust for our purposes is that he understands the medium to allow for perceptual experiences to be replayed by virtue of the medium's capacity for preservation and repeatability. In one passage, Husserl makes a comparison to hearing music, where repeated performances allow one to discern the same melody. More crucially, he suggests that one's intentional state can be such that the events depicted in cinematic images appear as if they were really happening.[26] In sum, he seems to understand the perception involved with film and motion pictures as mimicking or copying ordinary audiovisual perception. On this note, although there are important differences, Husserl's position is related to Vivian Sobchack's phenomenological account of the analogy between film images and the state of audiovisual perception. In Sobchack's thesis, film images comprise a "viewed view" whereby the viewer views the contents of the filmmaker's embodied state of vision.[27] In sum, then, I suggest we regard the intentionality of film and motion pictures in a similar mould, where the perception of images of this medium comprises experiencing a copy or imitation of everyday audiovisual consciousness.[28]

Finally, the strongest claim I want to leverage from the material discussed so far concerns how the concept of meaning from the *Logical Investigations* might square with the explorations on image consciousness and perceptual phantasy in film and motion pictures. Looking back at the *Investigations*, I suggest that the immediate, reality-directed character of film viewing qua the perceptual phantasy-variety of image consciousness can be read in conjunction with Husserl's theory of meaning. In other words, insofar as perceptual phantasy in Husserl's account involves perceiving, intending, or meaning an imaginary subject as if it were real, I suggest that there is a natural continuity here with the basic features of meaning and intentionality discussed above, given that these are also grounded in the world of real, first-person experience.

Film Viewing in the Context of Husserl's Theory of Meaning

My interest in what follows is to highlight the relevance of Husserl's account of meaning and intentionality in the way that these lend phenomenological clarity to issues of meaning and cognition in the *images*, or shots, of film and motion pictures. First, the intentionality involved with the viewing of film and motion pictures at the most basic level begins with one's meaning-intention upon viewing the shot. When I view a film shot, I perceive the subject(s) positioned in

the shot. I also typically perceive a surrounding context, such as a foreground or background, and perhaps the *mise en scene*. I may become intentionally minded toward who or what the subjects are, or what they are doing, or how they relate to their surroundings. And so forth. The point to emphasize in Husserlian terms is the partial, complementary nature of the various intentions at play as I perceive the shot. These partial intentions assemble themselves into a total, though not necessarily complete intentional state. For instance, in viewing Andy Warhol's single-shot film *Empire*, I might become intentionally minded toward not just the visage of the Empire State Building, but also the New York skyline, the weather, and the state of daylight. As I continue my engagement with the shot, I may become more or less intentionally aware of other things present or implicit in the shot, adding to the aggregate of partial intentions I am assembling in service of a total intentional picture. However, as we know, *Empire* is a film consisting of a single shot taken from a stationary camera. As such, it is bound to leave the viewer with primarily static meaning-intention, given that the viewing material afforded by the single continuous shot does not lead to subsequent fulfillment on its own. For me to achieve subsequent fulfillment, I might need to visit the building, or read a book about it.[29] *Empire* does not provide other shots that can complete or add to one's intentional comprehension. Thus, one is never able to see behind the building, or around it, or what is contained inside. In this regard, the "meaning," in Husserl's sense, that one can derive from viewing the film's continuous shot is going to be identical with the static meaning- intention occasioned by this viewing.

But we know that film and motion pictures also by and large consist of shots assembled together through editing, with one shot following another shot, often with some thematic, narrative, or hermeneutic connection linking them. And this occurrence typically plays out in a fashion where the sum of all of the work's shots supports comprehension of it as a cohesive whole. A question in classical film theory as well as in the philosophy of film and motion pictures regards the mechanism or causality with which the film viewer makes the cognitive transition from shot-to-shot. This question concerns what enables the viewer cognitively to connect one shot to the next, such that there is a discernable and justifiable logic of meaning. As Carroll has observed, because this occurrence has a communicative element, with the shot chains of films typically "communicating" a narrative, theme, or message, film theorists have sought ways to account for film editing as a kind of "language."[30] Apposite about Husserl's account of meaning and intentionality *vis-a-vis* the composition of films in edited shot chains is the repeated play of meaning- intention and meaning-fulfillment that the shot-to-shot transition occasions. For while an isolated shot, as we have observed, itself principally contains meaning for the viewer at the level of static, unfulfilled meaning-intention, subsequent shots offer opportunity for fulfillment. In other words, the transition from one shot's initial meaning-intention affords the possibility for meaning-fulfillment (even if only partially) in the next shot or shots to come later. And as a film proceeds, each transition to a new shot or shot chain likewise contributes further fulfillment to the series of meaning-intentions that precede them. The beginning sequences of narrative films furnish helpful illustration here, given that an opening sequence will typically occur without prior context. For a simple illustration, one might consider the opening shots of *Psycho* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1960), which begins with an establishing shot of a cityscape, followed by progressively more focused shots within the cityscape, eventually focusing on a single building, and ending with a scene-establishing shot of a hotel room inside this building, where two people are present. The hotel room scene provides meaning-fulfillment to the meaning-intentions afforded in the previous shots. The fulfillment furnished by the shot inside the hotel room fulfills one's initial meaning-intentions, regarding what is happening in this cityscape and in these buildings and in this particular building. Similarly, the shots leading up to the shot of the hotel room progressively lend fulfillment to the ones previous, by virtue of the progressive focus of each successive shot of the cityscape. For a more complex example, consider the opening scene of *Once Upon a Time in the West*

(Sergio Leone, 1968). This shot chain, which plays amidst the rolling of this film's opening titles, contains several shots occurring without dialogue and depicting unnamed men hanging around different parts of what appears to be a railroad depot in a remote outpost of the American frontier. The edits transition between shots of these men and various elements of the setting, including a water wheel, a telegraph machine, a pesky fly, and a leaky roof. We are able to gain a sense of what each man is up to, as the shots transition between initially establishing the character, shots contextualizing each man's scene placement, and eventually shots returning to each man, fulfilling that initial glimpse of meaning. Various auditory sounds also connect shots during these transitions, including the sound of the creaky water wheel that is heard alternately from close up and far away, and the buzzing of a fly, heard across multiple shots, that lands on one of these men as he waits in ambush position. These auditory connections linking the shots can be said to have a character of meaning-intention and subsequent fulfillment just as the visual image content. Eventually, it becomes evident that the men are waiting for something or someone; among other things, we see that they were prepared for a firefight when one breaks out. Again, the point to observe in Husserlian terms is that each shot, building from the first, offers at once some fulfillment of the meaning-intentions of the previous, while adding to a cumulative intentional sum of partial fulfillments. With the example at hand, the meaning- intentions afforded by the shots comprising this opening sequence of *Once Upon a Time in the West* add up to provide a total intention of a scene. And to be sure, this cumulative, aggregating structure may build, climax, and restart, as we see in the conclusion of *Once Upon a Time in the West*'s opening scene, which ends with a train arrival, a firefight, and the introduction of the "Harmonica" character, played by Charles Bronson. Finally, similar structures are easily observable in films as wholes, for instance with the famous last word of Kane in *Citizen Kane* (Orson Welles, 1941), "Rosebud," which is spoken at the film's start. It takes the entire duration of the film for the viewer to find fulfillment of this initial, mysterious word, yet this fulfillment ostensibly occurs. The meaning of "Rosebud" is fulfilled during the film's final sequence when a shot depicts a child's snow sled thrown into a fire as Kane's possessions are burned. The name "Rosebud" is etched on the sled. This example shows not only a case of an initially "signitive" or verbal meaning-intention receiving fulfilment with an image at the film's end. The example of "Rosebud" also illustrates how the viewer's meaning-intentional state can hold itself over indefinitely, as it were, awaiting prospective fulfilment as the entire film plays. And certainly there are films (such as e.g. *Rashomon* (Akira Kurosawa, 1950)) where such a final fulfillment never comes, leaving the film's narrative an open-ended series of meaning-intentions and partial fulfillments.

To be sure, film and motion picture media will exhibit countlessly varying degrees of the intention-fulfillment structures I have briefly described in the preceding examples. However, in summary, I suggest that the features of film and motion pictures I have analyzed here are *descriptive* traits of the film-viewing experience, predicated on the forward-, outward-looking character of perceptual, intentional consciousness. As Husserl observes, all perception consists of empty, fulfillment-seeking states of meaning, and alternately, it consists of states of meaning in which the former are fulfilled. To reiterate a quotation from Husserl cited in the first section above: all perception and imagination are a web of partially filled intentions. And these partial intentions often add together to build a total state of meaning. Thus, in the Husserlian framework, the construction of meaning on part of the film viewer is derivative from the nature of intentional consciousness, particularly its propensity to seek fulfillment for its states of meaning- intention. So by engaging Husserl's theory of meaning and the intentional structures it involves, we have effectively highlighted a phenomenological underpinning to the experience of meaning-building in the viewing of a film.

As a coda, I wish to highlight some of the ways that the Husserlian themes I have discussed have bearing for broader issues of meaning and interpretation in the philosophy of film and

motion pictures. Given the limitations of space, my summary will simply provide an outline of avenues for exploration. We have observed that meaning for Husserl consists of the dimensions of meaning-intention and meaning-fulfillment. Meaning is an act whereby one is either minded toward or else present with an object or state of affairs. Meaning as experienced in the images of film and motion pictures is thus predicated on one's being intentionally minded toward the objects or states of affairs made present in these, and where these objects and states of affairs presence themselves in an "as-if" guise of perceptual phantasy or immediate imagination. From this standpoint, meaning is not a quality of the cinematic image, but instead, realized intentionally with and through the cinematic image. Meaning in the viewing of film and motion pictures is therefore a phenomenon that occurs in first-person subjectivity.

In order to appreciate the thrust of this observation, consider the classical position of Roger Scruton regarding the lack of representative meaning in photographic pictures. Scruton holds that photographic images do not have representative meaning in their own right, or putting it simply, they do not "represent." Rather, Scruton holds, while the *subjects* of a film-photographic image may provoke aesthetic interest or suggest a meaning, there is nothing inherent to photographic images as such from which meaning can be derived.[31] This position suggests for the philosophy of film and motion pictures a parallel indication that images in these media cannot represent or convey meaning in their own right; meaning will at most consist in things like set design, lighting, acting, and other items depicted by the image. Noteworthy about Scruton's position *vis-à-vis* what I have discussed to this point is that Scruton treats meaning as if it were a property that could belong to the object on its own. Whereas in the Husserlian model I have sketched, meaning does not inhere in the object beheld, but instead, in the intentional consciousness of the viewer. In this guise, intentional consciousness is the conditioning locus for any meaning to be realized through a photograph, or through anything else. Moreover, in the view I have defended, meaning in film and motion picture images is also mediated through the alternating intentional steps of intention and fulfillment. The model I have described supposes a context of intentional consciousness in which intentions are fulfillment- seeking. Thus, the meaning afforded through the images of film-viewing occurs through this structure. From this perspective, meaning is not a feature of lone cinematic images, but rather, a dynamic act realized through the flow of images and shot chains. Moreover, my position has bearing not only for an argument such as Scruton's, which seeks to deny meaning to images of photography and its cousins, but also for philosophical views that ascribe an exaggerated sense of meaning to cinematic images. On this last, I am thinking of the Cavellian-Bazinian school, in which the film camera's subject is sometimes said to be "transfigured," achieving a special status of meaning, by virtue of appearing in a cinematic image. As with my rejoinder to Scruton, I would suggest that the phenomenological underpinning of meaning's intentional structure has application here.

Finally, I would emphasize that the position I have defended, while focusing principally on cognitive, epistemic dimensions of meaning in film viewership, should complement questions about the *kinds* of meaning that are possible in film and motion pictures. By this latter notion, I mean the different *types* of meaning (ex. referential, narrative, symbolic, cultural) film critics often observe in these works. While the specific types of meaning afforded by film and motion pictures ostensibly transcend the framework I have sketched here, I would suggest that the phenomenological account of meaning I have adapted from Husserl is a crucial component of the first-person, subjective underpinning of the various types of meaning that can occur cinematically. I would make the same case about broader questions regarding how film meaning occurs, for instance, whether it is viewer-"constructed," and how to account for filmmaker intention.[32]

Baton Rouge Community College, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, USA

Notes

[1] Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, trans. J.N. Findlay (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Books, 2000). Cited hereafter in paranthetical references as *LI*.

[2] Noël Carroll, *The Philosophy of Motion Pictures* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008), Chapter 3. According to Carroll, who prefers the term "motion pictures," the ontology of motion pictures is defined by the joint conditions of a two-dimensional array; whose matter of depiction is both spatiotemporally distinct from me, and capable of showing motion; whose token instances are identical with their type; and whose performances are identical with their type.

[3] Allan Casebier, *Film and Phenomenology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). Aside from focusing on Husserl's work circa *Ideas I*, Casebier's text predates publication of Husserl's writings on phantasy, image consciousness, and memory, missing out on crucial texts that would have altered the theorical landscape significantly. For more recent scholarship, see the special issue of *Studia Phaenomenologica*, XVI (2016), which treats the subject of Film and Phenomenology.

[4] Peter Simons, "Meaning and Language," in *The Cambridge Companion Husserl*, ed. Barry Smith and David Woodruff Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 110.

[5] J.N. Mohanty, *Husserl's Theory of Meaning*, Second Edition (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1969), 37–38.

[6] *Ibid*., 69.

[7] Rudolf Bernet, "Desiring to Know Through Intuition," *Husserl Studies* 19 (2003): 156-57.

[8] Mohanty, *Husserl's Theory of Meaning*, 47.

[9] *Ibid*., 41.

[10] *Ibid*., 46.

[11] Robert Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 17-18.

[12] Edmund Husserl, *Phantasy, Image Consciousness, and Memory (1898-1925)*, trans. John B. Brough (Dordrect: Springer, 2005). Hereafter cited in paranthetical references as *PICM*.

[13] Dan Zahavi, *Husserl's Phenomenology* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 16.

[14] Peter Shum, "The Evolution and Implications of Husserl's Account of the Imagination," *Husserl Studies* 31 (2015): 217.

[15] Regina-Nino Mion, "Husserl and Cinematographic Depictive Images," *Studia Phaenomeologica* XVI (2016): 272.

[16] Shum, "The Evolution and Implications of Husserl's Account of the Imagination," 217.

[17] *Ibid*., 218.

[18] *Ibid*.

[19] Robert Sokolowski, *Husserlian Meditations* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), 23, 25.

[20] *Ibid*., 24.

[21] John B. Brough, Translator's Introduction to Husserl, *Phantasy, Image Consciousness, and Memory*, XXXVIII. Also see John B. Brough, "Seeing and Showing: Film as Phenomenology," in *Art and Phenomenology*, ed. Joseph B. Parry (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), 192-93.

[22] Sokolowski, *Husserlian Meditations*, 24.

[23] Shum, "The Evolution and Implications of Husserl's Account of the Imagination," 218.

[24] Sokolowksi, *Husserlian Meditations*, 23, 25; Shum, "The Evolution and Implications of Husserl's Account of the Imagination," 218.

[25] Sokolowksi, *Husserlian Meditations*, 25.

[26] "It pertains to an image object that the depictive image, understood as image object, has a 'being' that persists and abides. This persisting, this remaining unchanged, does not mean that the image object is unchanging; indeed, it can be a depictive cinematografhic image…. If I let a cinematographic presentation run off repeatedly, then (in relation to the subject) the image object in the How of its modes of appearance itself is given as identically the same image object or as identically the same mode of appearance. This is also true, of course, when I make a piano piece play for me several times on a mechanical apparatus" (*PICM*, 645-46 [546]). "A stereoscopic, cinematographic semblance stands before me. 1) At first I lose myself in as-if contemplation; I contemplate the events as if they were actually happening. This is neutrality consciousness (phantasying). 2) Taking a position, I posit the semblance image as reality, as 'what is seen' in this quasi-seeing" (*PICM* 692 [574]). For additional commentary, see Claudio Rozzoni, "Cinema Consciousness: Elements of a Husserlian Approach to Film Image," *Studia Phaenomenologica* XVI (2016): 301ff.

[27] Vivian Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 3-14, 23-24, 56-57; more recently, see Vivian Sobchack, "The Active Eye (Revisited)," *Studia Phaenomenologica* XVI (2016): 63-90.

[28] One may also consider for further insight the web of relationships Husserl describes within which image consciousness operates in the principal subjects of the writings on phantasy, image consciousness, and memory. Given that memory and phantasy are both derivative from everyday intentional consciousness, and given the propensity of cinematic media to play and replay experiences similarly to memory and phantasy, it is fitting to hold that film viewing comprises a brand of intentionality somewhere between memory and phantasy, and which involves a degree of recording and communication of everyday audiovisual perception.

[29] Shum, "The Evolution and Implications of Husserl's Account of the Imagination," 216.

[30] For a survey of views, see Noël Carroll, "Toward a Theory of Film Editing," in *Theorizing the Moving Image*, ed. Noël Carroll (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 403-420.

[31] Roger Scruton, "Photography and Representation," *Critical Inquiry* 7(3) (1981): 577-603.

[32] For surveys on types and mechanisms of meaning in film and motion pictures, see Berys Gaut, *A Philosophy of Cinematic Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), Chapter 4; George Wilson, "Interpretation," in *The Routledge Companion to Philosophy and Film*, ed. Paisley Livingston and Carl Plantinga (London: Routledge, 2009), 162-72.

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The Fictional Film

FRANK BOARDMAN

Abstract: A typical strategy in the philosophy of film is to identify a question or theory and then consult the data of cinematic phenomena that might speak to it. Here I take somewhat the opposite approach. I start with a particular phenomenon and make the case for its application to a fairly wide range of issues. The phenomenon in question is the "fictional film," which may be either an embedded fiction or a fictional document. I argue that the fictional film helps us work through some particularly thorny issues in film ontology, meaning, engagement, authorship and ethics.

Keywords: Realism, film ethics, movies-within-movies, embedded fictions, fictional documents

In a period of just a few minutes toward the crescendo of David Fincher's *Gone Girl* (2014) we see:

> (i) Characters carry out the film's fictional events without being filmed; (ii) Characters watch news coverage of some of the film's fictional events; (iii) Characters watch video surveillance footage of some of the film's fictional events; (iv) Video surveillance footage of fictional events which (as far as we know) no character watches

Now of course in (i) the *actors* are *actually* being filmed, but the characters, who fictionally do all sorts of things, are not fictionally being filmed. But in (ii)-(iv) we have filming of both actors (actually) and characters (fictionally). There are, then, in (ii)-(iv), what we'll call "fictional films," not to be confused with a "fiction film," like *Gone Girl* itself, which is a kind of actual film.

To be sure, fictional films are also actual films. After all, the video of Nick Dunne (character) being interviewed on the news is also a video of Ben Affleck (actor) acting. The surveillance video of Amy Dunne (character) is also a video of Rosamund Pike (actor) acting.[1] And yet there is something present in these cases that is absent in (i), where the actual film that we see contains no fictional films.

In a kind of inversion of the standard way that we approach film philosophically, I'll begin in the first section by looking closely at this fictional film phenomenon.[2] And then in the second I'll consider some of the questions it may help us address.

I. Fictional Films, Fictional Cameras

One way of characterizing fictional films is that they are both depicting and depicted in film. There is, for instance, the snippet of film in *Gone Girl* that depicts Amy Dunne on security camera footage. That same snippet also depicts the footage itself via the use of a style which we immediately recognize as being like that which is produced by security cameras. Most importantly, it is in black and white, of a lower quality than the rest of the movie, and shot from a static above-the-action angle. It is possible, though not necessary, that the footage was produced by an actual security camera. Fiction films that are neither themselves fictional films nor include fictional films imply the existence of an actual camera – after all, we are watching something recorded on one – but not a fictional camera. Fictional films imply both an actual and a fictional camera. The camera in a fictional film both captures the fictional content and is itself a prop in the fiction, albeit a potentially unseen one.

So, the fictional film involves a camera that lives on both sides of the "is fictional that…" operator. That is to say, we may recognize both actual and fictional filming. To complicate matters a bit, the fictional film may in turn be either fiction or non-fiction within the world of the fiction film with which we engage. In the former kind of case – for instance "Tears of Love" in *The Artist* – the fictional film is an embedded fiction, a film-within-a-film. This phenomenon has received more theoretical and critical attention than other forms of fictional film, owing in part to Hollywood's obsession with itself.[3] In the latter type, the fictional film documents events true within the fiction film. All of the instances (ii)-(iv) above are of this kind.

Both sorts of fictional films have analogues in other artforms. The play within *Hamlet* and various stories in *The Canterbury Tales* are embedded fictions. The newspaper articles that we read in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and Isabella's letter in *Wuthering Heights* are fictional documents. A more intriguing (for our current purposes anyway) literary example may be Phil José Farmer's *Venus on the Half Shell*, a ridiculous book written – fictionally – by Kilgore Trout, Kurt Vonnegut's equally fictional science fiction writer. Even painting may allow for similar phenomena, as in Vermeer's *The Art of Painting* or Courbet's *The Painter's Studio*, both of which prominently depict paintings via painting.

The fictional film also has a number of filmic cousins. Archival films repurposed in a contemporary documentary, for example scenes from *The Shining* that we see in *Room 237* – a documentary about interpretations of *The Shining* - seem at first to operate much the same way. However, *The Shining* is not presented as fictional in the world of *Room 237*. Being a documentary, that world is – we hope – the actual world, where *The Shining* is an actual, not fictional, work of fiction. A more difficult set of questions arise from film of actual events repurposed in fiction films – for example, the newsreel footage projected during a "treatment" scene in *A Clockwork Orange*. It seems to me just as reasonable to say that anything in a fiction film is fictional as it does to say that the snippet is a departure from the purely fictional content of the otherwise-fiction film. Either way, the inclusion or exclusion of that newsreel footage will ultimately hinge on whether the viewer takes the filming of that snippet *in that context* to be an actual or merely fictional event. Again, and in any event, a fictional film implies a fictional camera.

II. Lessons

I would not want to have to justify the intrinsic significance of fictional films. We should instead be interested in them for their instrumental value in helping us work through some more general issues in the philosophy of film. I'll try to make the case here for their suggestive value, though I'll have to stop short of claiming that the fictional film provides anything like a final resolution to any problem. In the absence of such bounty, we'll have to judge the harvest by the quality of what it brings in.

To that end, let us start with some low hanging fruit: the fictional film provides us with some data that disconfirms an extreme version of realism in the ontology of film. For such a view we need look no further than realism's first great champion, Andre Bazin, who famously said things like "The reality that cinema reproduces at will and organizes is the same worldly reality of which we are a part, the sensible continuum out of which the celluloid makes a mold both spatial and temporal."[4] On this view the camera, acting as a kind of perceptual aid, is in kind no different from a window except that its main advantage is that it allows us to see past events instead of events beyond a wall. When we see a fiction film, then, the fiction-making must all be done on the other side of the camera. Just as we might see a play performed just outside our window without the window itself doing any fiction-making, so too does a camera add nothing other than an aid to seeing a past performance.

Now even an extreme realist can make sense of some fictional films quite easily. Take a case like (ii) above. The news-coverage film is just a part of the performance that delivers *Gone Girl*'s

fictional content. The characters fictionally look into the past to see an interview the same way that we actually look into the past to see what amounts to a stage performance. That we are literally seeing into the past twice provides no additional complication. To extend our previous metaphor, the fictional film is like a window in a stage setting, which we may see through our actual window along with the rest of a play.

The problem for such accounts emerges instead in cases like (iv), where we are told that we are seeing characters through security camera footage, either by the use of a camera filter or an actual security camera. In response to case like this, where the entire screen that we see is taken up by the fictional security footage and there is no suggestion that any character fictionally sees the footage, it seems that we cannot say that all of the fiction-making happens on the other side of the camera. The camera itself, though we never see it, rather obviously provides some of the fictional content. Specifically, there is a fictional security camera in *Gone Girl* depicted by the *way in which* the action is filmed rather than what is filmed.

The fictional film also speaks to questions we may have about meaning in film. Gregory Currie's well-known arguments against the notion that film is a language – most notably that that film is not a symbol system complete with syntactic rules together with a semantics that maps well-formed formulae generated by those rules to meanings in a way that does not depend on natural fit or resemblance – seem to me entirely correct and devastating to such a strong claim. But film can be language-like in any number of ways without being a language per se.

The fictional film suggests that film can be language-like in two important respects. First, films admit of levels of meaning the same way that languages do. Quotations and references to – as opposed to uses of – words and phrases provide much the same function in everyday language that the fictional film does in communicating cinematic meaning. For example, by using quot-ations, a speaker puts herself at some degree of removal from the content of the quoted material, even if the "person" being quoted is hypothetical or otherwise fictional. The implication is that she is not just re-presenting what someone or something else said but presenting it *as* a presentation of those words distinct from her own. So too is a fictional film distinct from the overall filmic presentation in a way that matters quite a bit to meaning.

To see the second way that film can be language-like, we might focus narrowly on the changes in color, texture, contrast etc. that happen when the film moves to fictional security-camera footage. The meaning change – especially for our purposes the introduction of the fictional security camera – isn't simply carried by the fact that the shot looks like security camera footage, but also by the fact that the rest of the movie *doesn't* look like that. There is an understood norm of filmmaking and film engagement that allows us to expect consistency in film style. When that norm is obviously violated we are primed to look for a corresponding change in intended meaning that would warrant such a violation. The meaning, then, is carried out in part *by* the upsetting of our reasonable expectations. This is precisely how violations of (more or less Gricean[5]) conver-sational maxims carry meaning in sentences. We recognize sarcasm, for instance, by virtue of recognizing that a speaker has seemingly violated a maxim that we are to not say what we think to be false. The violation of the maxim forces us to look for a change in the surface meaning of the words that would justify it, exactly as the violation of cinematic norms forces us to posit a change in meaning when we are suddenly presented with film in a very different style. We may say, then, that film may lack linguistic syntax and semantics, but shares at least some of the prag-matic features of everyday language.

There are additional lessons to be drawn from fictional films regarding our engagement with film in general. We may, despite some justified pessimism about Bazin-style realism, think that our experience of film is *as of* a distinctly realistic medium. Currie, for instance, argues for a kind of limited realism wherein film is distinct among artforms by virtue of its capacity to depict via the same sorts of perceptual experiences that we use to identify objects in real life.[6] To extend that sort of account a bit, we watch *Gone Girl* and simply see Amy Dunne doing whatever she

fictionally does in the film, whereas in Gillian Flynn's novel on which the movie was based, we read and at most *see that* Amy does whatever she fictionally does.

The question before us is ultimately about whether – or to what extent – our engagement with film involves a direct and literal "seeing" or an inferential and therefore more figurative "seeing." To see how the fictional film may bear on that question, we should first notice that we experience the transition from actual fiction film to fictional fiction film strikingly seamlessly, despite the violation of expectation we just considered. Part of that is surely due to the prevalence of fictional films and the cinematic conventions that surround them. But the transition is smoother than those facts can explain. I do not seem to have to attend to any convention or need much experience with the phenomenon to follow what is going on in movies that contain fictional films. That phenomenal continuity makes it reasonable to assume, ceteris paribus, that whatever processes help us understand the security-camera sequence are the same that were operative in our engagement with the shots right before and right after. And there is no sense – at least in (iv) above – in which we directly see Amy Dunne captured on security footage. The nature of those shots, especially their juxtaposition to the cinematography of the rest of the film, allows us to *see that* she was (fictionally) captured by a security camera. We make an inference to the fictional camera not from what we see but from the way that we see it. The continuity of our experience, then, suggests that film engagement in general involves more inferential process than we may realize.

We can find another piece of evidence for a more inference-dependent experience of film by comparing our emotional connections to embedded fictions (i.e. fictions-within-fictions) to our emotional connections to fictional documents (like the security camera footage). We have some relative emotional distance from the embedded fiction that we don't from the fictional document. We tend to care more about the characters in the latter than in the former. But why? We "see" – in whatever sense we do so – things happening to fictional characters in both instances, but somehow the emotional resonance of film fictions does not carry across two fiction/non-fiction divides all the way to us, at least not without some seriously diminished returns. Because the sensory experience of the two sorts of fictional film are the same, the difference cannot be merely sensory. And because they are both fictional, the difference cannot be precisely the same as that which causes the differences between our emotional engagement with fictional and real-life events.

Let us move now from a focus on the reception of films to their creation, and the question of film authorship. Traditionally, the problem of authorship in films is about the *necessity* of requisite intention and control, which are often lacking in (especially large studio) films whose contents result from the decisions of far too many people to posit a single author. And that group's intentions may be too varied for even collective authorship to be plausible. We can set these issues aside – along with more fundamental questions about a stable notion of "authorship" in the first place.[7]

Rather, the possibility of an embedded fictional film in even the smallest, most tightly and individually controlled movie suggests that responsibility for making is not *sufficient* for authorship. That sort of film, as a fictional object, has at most a fictional author. People make fictions, but no one actually makes strictly fictional things. But the fictional film has a sort of dual life. It is a fictional film because it is a film in the world of a fiction. But it also an actual sequence of film. It exists in our world as much as any other actual duration of film. And it *could* be separated from the fiction in which it occurs and shown on its own as any other film. If it were to be so separated and displayed, its authorship would be no more in question than the film in which it was a fiction.

The question, then, is whether that potential is enough to provide the fictional film with its own independent identity in the actual world. I think that it does not. Unless and until that kind of separation actually happens, our hypothetical ultra-auteur has only authored one film, not two – no matter how fully realized the embedded fictional film turns out to be. The actual filmmaker has *made* the embedded fictional film as much as the actual flim, but authorship seems to require something else, something found in the nature of a film's display or presentation.

A final – at least for now – return on our investment in fictional films concerns ethical issues in films and filmmaking. Here are five claims that likely seem to many of us to be independently plausible:

(a)   Filmmakers are morally responsible for the message or meaning of their films.
(b)   Filmmakers make both fiction films and the fictional films they may contain.
(c)   Fictional films can have messages or meanings.
(d)   Filmmakers are not morally responsible for fictional actions or their results.
(e)   Fictional films result from fictional actions.

These claims are prima facie inconsistent. (a), (b) and (c) together imply that filmmakers are morally responsible for the messages and meanings of fictional films, (d) and (e) imply that they are not.

How are we to escape this apparent impasse (I stop short of calling this a "paradox" for reasons that will become apparent in a moment)? Let's start with a couple plausible strategies that won't quite work. First, some of these claims may be more controversial than I think. (a), for starters, is a substantive claim about film and ethics and – unless there is something strangely unique about film – relies on a principle about the ethics of narrative art, which is (at present) the subject of much controversy and discussion. However, not every claim in a field rife with disagreement is subject to disagreement. The controversial issues at the intersection of ethics and narrative art tend to concern either the ethical status of works themselves or the impact of moral value on aesthetic value.[8] (a) above involves neither of these. All agreement on (a) seems to require is a recognition that making a film, like anything else that people do that can impact others, has moral value. To deny that, one would have to either deny that any action has moral value or that filmmaking is a very special activity not subject to moral constraints. If I have lost the attention of adherents to these views, it is not by introducing (a), but by considering ethical issues of filmmaking at all. For anyone else, just imagine a film with the worst sort of aggressively racist, sexist, homophobic or otherwise untoward message – could an appeal to the innocence of filmmaking in general justify making it?

Next, it may look like I'm cheating a bit with (c). Fictional films may have meanings and messages, but those meanings and messages will be just as fictional as the films themselves, and so of a different sort than the meanings and messages of actual films. I have already said as much earlier in this paper. The question, then, is whether or not this difference means that my use of (c) above is improper. True, the messages and meanings of fictional films are fictionally directed to fictional audiences to whom no actual harm can come. But even if actual audiences are only overhearing them (which would be a fairly gross understatement of our role), it is at least not obvious to me that people are not morally responsible for the effects of their messages on those who are likely to overhear them.

(d) may seem obvious to us, but it is worth noticing that no less a shadow than Plato's looms over it. In Books II and III of the *Republic*, he comes awfully close to claiming that fictional stories should not depict evil deeds – and he at least claims that good things should not happen to those who do evil. If either of these are correct, then we have a condemnation of fiction-making as we ("we" including Plato) understand it. If the reader holds Plato's view of narrative fiction, I will not try to argue against it. Instead I'll just applaud your patience for getting this far in a conversation about what you must see as a woefully misunderstood and benighted subject.

Another attractive path out of our predicament may be to claim either that (b) and (e) are already inconsistent, so the larger inconsistency shouldn't be surprising, or that they are consistent only because of a hidden equivocation among them between fictional and actual making. This strategy, though, seems only to re-state the problem. Of course fictional and actual making are different. What we are struggling with is the dual nature of the fictional film, which must be actually made in order to play the right sort of role in the fiction in which it appears. In this it is no different from a prop hammer made just for a stage play. That hammer is both actually and fictionally a hammer, and no less of either because of the other. So there is some ambiguity. But mere ambiguity does not entail equivocation. We can, while maintaining the distinction between the fictional and actual natures of the fictional film, think of the problem this way: the filmmaker

seems to be responsible for the fictional film in one sense but not in the other. It is our present task to make sense of this in a way that can inform actual decisions and how we think about them – which is why we are dealing with a puzzle rather than a paradox.

How then, should we resolve this issue? For that, I think we ought to revisit (a), but for different reasons than those considered above. Specifically, we ought to return to the distinction between the makers and authors of film. If we replace "filmmaker" in (a) with "film author" our problem evaporates because, as we discussed, fictional films have actual and fictional makers but only fictional authors. What this means, then, for moral responsibility in film is that moral demands attach to film authors rather than makers.

Conclusions?

We have considered a number of standing issues in the philosophy of film and resolved none of them. But if successful, I have convinced you that the fictional film is an as-yet underdeveloped and underutilized tool that we can bring to bear on them. As it goes with philosophy, a new tool will likely bring with it a host of new problems. We will have to see over time if those problems outweigh the advantages to which I have appealed.

Worcester State University, USA

Notes

[1] What I'm alluding to here is essentially the motif/model distinction Arthur Danto makes in *Moving Pictures* (1979).

[2] There are examples of this sort of data-focused strategy. Perhaps most famous among them is Deleuze's (1989) emphasis on the montage in grounding his understanding of the time-image.

[3] See, for instance, James Lyons's criticism-focused "Portals: Exploring Films Within Films" edited collection of review essays (2000).

[4] Bazin (2003), 30.

[5] Grice (1989), esp. 26-32.

[6] Currie (1995) esp. 79-112.

[7] Though for both of those, along with a slightly different distinction between filmmakers and film authors, do see Livingston (2006).

[8] See, for instance, Carroll (2010).

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Inspiration for a Libidinal Cinema:
Klossowski, Lyotard, and the *Tableau Vivant*

MICHAEL NEWELL WITTE

Abstract: Considered a "classic" text in film theory, Jean-François Lyotard's "Acinema" (1973) has been subject to recent critical reappraisal. Part of that consideration, I argue, would benefit from an excavation of Lyotard's own specific set of resources, an area left under-examined in the contemporary discussion of his work. In this essay, I look at one of Lyotard's philosophical forebearers, a figure who Lyotard engages in order to overcome the hegemonic theories of Freud and Lacan. With the aid of the erotic novelist and philosopher Pierre Klossowski, Lyotard crafts an alternative film theoretical discourse in distinction to the classical arguments of psychoanalytic film theory, as well as both realist and formalist notions of film economy.

Keywords: Lyotard, Klossowski, continental philosophy, psychoanalysis, film theory

In his 1973 essay "L'acinéma," the philosopher Jean-François Lyotard theorizes cinema as the product of negation. The essay, published originally in the arts journal *Revue d'esthétique,* was written in the wake of Lyotard's own *Discours, figure* (1971), his prolonged defense of avant garde aesthetics. Highlighting the prominence of the image in psychoanalysis as the feature motivating Freud's conception of primary process thinking, Lyotard's analysis was premised on a deconstruction of psychoanalysis's mutual implication of image-based, pre-symbolic mental processes and the realm of discourse that conforms them. "Acinema" comprises an elaboration of this project, gauging the medium's potential for a *positive*, pre-symbolic form of "thinking."

Film itself, for Lyotard, in its most rudimentary aspect, comprises precisely this phantasmal force, a material that yields intermediately to language, more specifically to the conventional language(s) of cinema. What remains unassimilable in this process, he explains, falls to the cutting room floor. Yet these abandoned shards of celluloid are no different than that stuff from which film in its final product is composed—discontinuous fragments of reality ushered into place ("made productive") by the hand of the film's editor. "No movement," he writes, "is given to the eye/ear of the spectator for what it is. Instead, every movement brought forward sends back to something else, is written as a plus or minus on the ledger book which is film, is valuable because it returns to something else, because it is thus potential return and profit."[1] The sensuous immediacy of film, its immanence as an "intensity of recorded reality," is, in other words, negated by the actions of the director, the editor, the post-production crew, whose job it is to effectively neuter the image of its excess—to give the image over not to what it is in itself but to what it can contribute to the next article in the continuous chain of images.

Lyotard's description of the cinema, posed from the perspective of the film practitioner, has its counterpart in a competing theory which takes as its center the passive subjectivity of the spectator. The theoretical concept of "suture," which originates in Lacan's seminars,[2] was incorporated into film theory through the work of Jean-Pierre Oudart, Daniel Dayan and Stephen Heath as a concept of cinematic space serving to provide a solution to the problem of "primary identification" central to Jean-Louis Baudry's and Christian Metz's psychoanalytic film theories. Their argument concerning the spectator's imaginary identification with the place of the camera would, according to the suturists, be necessarily undermined by the spectator's awareness of the frame as such. As

Kaja Silverman notes, in Lacan's mirror stage, the joy associated with the infant's moment of self-recognition is mediated instantly by the "lack" embedded in his image, a feeling of displeasure that becomes inextricably tied with *jouissance* thereafter.[3] In its relationship to suture, this displeasure is analogous to the kind of tension produced by the first (potentially unresolved) shot in a film sequence, a tension held at bay by cinema's consistent "phasing-in of subject vision" in continuity editing. With the successful relay of narrative, the spectator is, of course, meant to understand the desire of the characters and their motivations for achieving these goals. The ingenuity of the suturists, however, was to ask, beyond basic character pathology, what is it that motivates the cinema itself. Recognition of the figure that sutures film's discourse, the "Absent One" in Oudart's term, is tantamount, they say, to the trauma of the mirror, a repression that haunts the entire history of cinema's narrative development. This figure is made apparent only ever in the uncanny cinematic hiccup— the fortuitous moment in a film when narrative becomes "unsutured" and hence gives way to this cinematic Other.

With a premise similar to the suturists ("film acts as the orthopedic mirror analyzed by Lacan […] [as] the constitutive function of the imaginary subject"), Lyotard's project branches off as soon as it leaves the domain of critique in an attempt to make room for a positive conception of cinema as an alternative to the classical paradigm, a cinema of the impulses.[4] In suture theory, the delineation of the "absent one" never takes a positive form, but appears only ever as an excess cast in relief against the enunciation of a narrative. What is essential for this theory, therefore, is narrative production, a place where the "objects" of film can reliably unite. For the suturists, in other words, imaginary identification has always-already occurred: the body of the child is delivered to the symbolic order as soon as its spatial relations are configured, as soon as the child's image is given unity in the gaze of an other. Even when this big Other rears its head, it can do so only negatively. Its negative existence is the ultimate reminder of the assimilating power of the symbolic order—whatever lapses these drives arise, they do so only to be (re)subordinated to the proper functioning of conscious thought.

Suture's edifice, therefore, leaves little room for a conception of cinema outside the bounds of narrative representational development. There can be no conception, within this theory, for the functioning of primary process thinking or unconscious, image-based mental processes as they relate to imaginary identification. Claiming this difference, Lyotard writes: "The real problem is to know *why* the drives spread about the polymorphous body *must have* an object where they can unite. That the imperative of unification is given as a hypothesis in a philosophy of 'consciousness' is betrayed by the very term 'consciousness,' but for a 'thought' of the unconscious […], the question of the production of unity, even an imaginary unity, can no longer fail to rise in all its opacity."[5] On this line of thinking, it has been, according to Lyotard, a mistake to accredit Freud with the discovery of the movement of the drives. Freud's project was rather to describe impulsive life only in reference to what can be said of it, and hence from these descriptions he derives the terminology of his discipline—a translation of the unconscious drives into conscious speech. There is, for Lyotard, however, no discipline without a 'disciplining.' Psychoanalysis must necessarily by reference to 'structure' denigrate sensual experience. Cinema no doubt takes the same function: movements that derive from impulsive life are disciplined, limited to the (cinematic) norms of tolerance.

Lyotard follows instead a vocabulary set forth by the philosopher Pierre Klossowski, who, in his literature and especially in his writings on Sade and Nietzsche, produces a philosophy of the simulacrum, a 'kinetic problematic' conceived primarily not as representation, but rather as enigma: 'the paradoxical product of the disorder of the drives, as a composite of decompositions.' Within this vocabulary an alternative consideration for cinema might take form—an 'acinema' that exists at the antipodes of the medium, at the extremes of movement and non-movement. A digression through Klossowski's conceptual edifice is therefore necessary before we continue with Lyotard's analysis—in particular, his formulation of the *tableau vivant*, which, for Lyotard, exists at the "antipodes" of cinema: cinematic stasis, or the mobile rendering of a frozen two-dimensional

image. Klossowski's theorization of the tableau forms the basis of Lyotard's reception of stasis, ergo it must be considered as paramount for his theorizing the potential of a cinematic avant garde. It provides, likewise, a guiding light through the quagmire of recognition as elaborated by the premises of suture theory and psychoanalytic film discourse. The difficulty of this effort, however, lies in translating the effect of Klossowski's theorization, obscured in the setting of a pornographic-philosophical fiction, into the discourse of academic philosophy—something that Lyotard deftly accomplishes in *Économie libidinale*.

Introduced in Klossowski's fiction in the context of his 'Laws of Hospitality' trilogy, a series of erotic-philosophical novels written between 1953 and 1960, the *tableau vivant* plays an important role in the description of a (fictional) set of paintings related by Klossowski's protagonist Octave, an aging, perverse theologian and art collector, thought to be a double for the author himself. The first novel in the trilogy, *La Révocation de l'Édit de Nantes* (1959),[6] comprises a set of diary entries written by Octave and his wife Roberte, oscillating between two narratives: the first, Octave's commentary on the works of an imaginary pompier artist named Tonnerre, the erotically-charged paintings that form Octave's personal collection and (2) the description and enactment of the bizarre custom that he and his wife share, referred to as the 'laws of hospitality.' These laws, codified by Octave and pinned to the wall of their abode, detail the rules of their home, that Octave, in his duties as host, must offer his wife to the pleasure of his many fortuitous house-guests. For Octave, the rationale for these laws is perversely theological, legitimized by an argument from medieval Scholastic philosophy, a line of reasoning that rests on the following premise: in order to possess the essence of Roberte, Octave must first deny her purely accidental distinctions ("society woman," "wife," "hostess") to uncover her "essence" in the moment of its becoming. Over the course of the narrative, the setting of the novel becomes increasingly surreal. Its most frequently cited episode is the infamous scene in which Roberte, tied to parallel bars, has the palms of her hands licked by a hunchbacked dwarf and a giant. Such scenes have an ambiguous relationship to the laws described. Are they, in fact, offerings of Octave's wife according to these laws? Are they imaginary? In descriptions resembling dreams, are they instead projections of the husband's desire? The question of these visions' origin, whether Octave's descriptions might be trusted, or, if they are too marred by pathology to be extricated from the logic of his peculiar desires, is the question present in the other aspect of the novel, in the erotic and eroticizing descriptions of the paintings. "Is there not risk enough," Octave wonders, "that my own descriptions, though based on the painting's material reality, should hint at a morbid reverie?"[7]

Octave's formal descriptions of his art collection, which account for the greater portion of the novel, are remarkably similar to those descriptions he gives of his wife Roberte while she undergoes various forms of sexual acts. Often neglecting explicit sexual description, Octave places primary emphasis on the hands and what they express: resistance or beckoning. There remains room enough in these passages for the descriptions to be fabricated, to be an analysis of events, or analyses of paintings that are skewed by Octave's predilections, a reading encouraged by the fact that the paintings so closely resemble the situations that Roberte herself becomes involved. This problem of origination regarding Octave's textual analyses becomes summarized in the problematic of the *tableau vivant*, which Octave writes about in length in reference to the subtleties of reading the images: "In the motifs represented in several pictures […] you recognize a propensity for scenes where violence is due to a cunning unveiling—not to the unveiled, not to the nudity, but to the unveiling, to what is in itself the least pictorial instant." "The eye," he says, "likes to rest upon a storyless motif, and our artist seems to unsettle this repose by suggesting to the mind what the painting hides. But as he is no less a thorough expert upon the space in which the object of his emotion is situated as volume, this suggestive vision comes from his skill at suspended gesture—one is almost prepared to believe he did his paintings after 'tableaux vivants.'" "In effect, though the *tableau vivant* genre is but one manner of understanding the spectacle life offers itself, what does this spectacle show us if not life reiterating itself in an attempt to right itself in the midst of its fall, as if holding its breath in a momentary apprehension of its origins; but reiteration of life

by life would be hopeless without the simulacra produced by the artist who, to produce this spectacle, manages to deliver himself from reiteration."[8]

At the center of the *tableau vivant*, thus, for Octave, is the suspended gesture, the holding of breath by the actor of the enacted painting, who, attempting to maintain this 'natural' state, a gesture indicating the movement of its character, sways under the pressure of the forces of gravity upon him. This gesture supposedly indicates something to be interpreted, but is characterized instead by an uneasiness. This uneasiness, for Octave, exists as the effect of the intrusion of language (the intrusion of interpretation) into the flow of material reality, from which the 'idea' of the gesture is isolated. "To what words do these gestures relate?" Octave asks. "Probably to those the painter supposes said by his characters, no less than to those the spectator may be saying as he contemplates the scene."[9] This opposition between 'gesture' and 'language' becomes evident in the opposition represented itself in the fixed state of the gesture—immobile, but supposedly representative of movement: "life giving itself as a spectacle to life; of life hanging in suspense."[10] Octave explains this disjunct by reference to the phenomenon of the *solécisme*, an error in the gesture's "syntax," as if the ambiguous gesture proceeds from a grammatical mistake in the body's own non-verbal language: "But if it were a matter of solecism," he says, "if it were something contrary which the figures utter through this or that gesture, they must say something in order that this opposition be palpable; but painted they are silent; would the spectator speak on their behalf, in such a way as to sense the opposite of the gesture he sees them performing? It remains to be seen whether, having painted such gestures, the artist wanted to avoid solecism; or whether, from painting the kind of scenes he chose, he was, to the contrary, trying to demonstrate the positiveness of the solecism which could be expressed only through means of an image."[11]

What is at stake between Octave's reading of the *tableau* and his fantasy, involving himself as voyeur to the exploitation of Roberte, the philosopher Deleuze summarizes in his essay from the appendix of *Logique du sens*: "He [Octave] attempts to multiply Roberte's essence," he writes, "to create as many simulacra and reflections of Roberte as there are persons in relation to her, and to inspire Roberte to emulate somehow her own doubles, thanks to which Octave, the voyeur, possesses and is able to know her better than if he had kept her, quite simply, for himself."[12] The problem for Octave's analysis of the *tableau* is precisely that it breaks with the singularity of the subject and implies, in the solecism, the conditions for recognizing the *insignificance* of the object. "One possesses thoroughly only what is expropriated, placed outside of itself, split in two, reflected in the gaze, and multiplied by possessive minds."[13] Hence, if vision takes the form of possession, consisting in a doubling, a dividing and a multiplying of the image, the voyeur, in witnessing what occurs, has a more intense participation than if he were immediately involved. Envisioning the object, in other words, in its *insignificance* means to 'possess' what exceeds personal experience, what is multiple in the object: "To possess is thus to give over to possession and to see the given multiplied in the gift."[14]

To Lyotard's critique of the drives in Freud's project, it suffices to say that 'reality' "is only ever a sector of the imaginary field which we have agreed to renounce, from which we have accepted to withdraw our phantasms of desire."[15] The image, the phantasmatic object, is given first; it correlates to the vision of the subject; the solecism is negated, and hence the image is understood as grammatical. "Representation," writes Lyotard, "is therefore essential to this phantasmatic; it is essential that the spectator be offered instances of identification, recognizable forms, matter for the memory, because it is at the price of going beyond this and disfiguring the order of propagation that the intense emotion is felt."[16] This price paid ('disfiguring the order of propagation') is the dissolution of the subject, of the productive self, and the sudden emergence of a 'new' "unproductive" subject, which Octave aspires for his wife Roberte: "This image of self, mirrored in the gaze of others upon her, only comes to her when inside her there wells up the irresistible urge to live, which she thinks she is obliged to curb, an urge to be free of her dignity, of this dignity that seems to be engraved in the regularity of her features."[17]

The price of dissipation, and its resultant creation of a new subject, "is the same price" writes Lyotard, "that the cinema should pay if it goes to the first of its extremes, immobilization: because this latter [...] means that it would be necessary to endlessly undo the conventional synthesis that normally all cinematographic movements proliferate."[18] In the context of Lyotard's early writings, acinema presents a theory tied to this larger project of libidinal economy: a project to render, against the ravages of institutional signification, an alternative political economy for the preservation of impulsive life. If classical cinema produces through its conventions of framing and editing a 'glorious body' in the form of a cinematic language, acinema retrieves its libido in the form of cinematic disruption. These disruptions (in reference to the critique of suture theory) would not have a 'negative existence' against the positive constructions of cinematic form. Disjunctions between soundtrack and image, between images themselves, contain the only essential form of cinema. The notion that a medium's structure prefigures narrative content is undermined, from the seat of the spectator, by the fact that content is, again and again, eternally present. The difference for Lyotard is that the first shot (understood as the "phantasm") eternally recurs, figuratively speaking. Its aesthetic is not simply that of a visual practice alternative to the classical paradigm; its aesthetic is that of vision itself, of Octave's vision, a vision that doubles and re-doubles and never in fact possesses what it seeks. Beyond the tragic dissolution of an ideal spectator, what emerges for Lyotard is the place of a creator (an editor, a director), who sees the image freed from conventional burdens. Narrative is thus known as that which offers the image (and the impulses) fictitious goals and meanings.

This revelation, however, is not the end of fictions once and for all, a total de-mystification. "If we demystify," says Klossowski, "it is only to mystify more thoroughly."[19] What becomes revealed, after conventional narratives are unsettled, is a choice: either to produce simulacra in conformity to the constraints of communication or to produce them via the obsessional constraints of perversion. This choice, for Lyotard, marks the place of the artist—the place of Octave whose desires faithfully shape and distort his readings. The exchange of images according to this latter model represents a 'fraudulent exchange,' a rupturist form marked by the intensities of the voyeur-artist, who, in his brooding over the unified, immobile image, denounces his own inadequacy to reproduce it in thought.

University of California, San Diego, USA

Notes

[1] Lyotard, Jean-François. "L'acinéma," *Des dispositifs pulsionnels*. Éditions Galilée, 1994, 58. Originally published in *Revue d'esthétique*, n° 2-4, 1973. "Aucun mouvement [...] n'est donné à l'œil-oreille du spectateur pour ce qu'il est....[A]u contraire tout mouvement proposé *renvoie* à autre chose, s'inscrit en plus ou moins sur le livre de compte qu'est le film, *vaut* parce qu'il *revient-à* autre chose, parce qu'il est donc du revenu potentiel, et du rentable."

[2] "Suture," a term appropriated by Jacques-Alain Miller from Lacan, is applied for the purpose of designating the relationship of the subject to the chain of its discourse. The concept of suture was formally introduced in a lecture entitled "Suture: Elements of the Logic of the Signifier." *Cahiers pour l'analyse* 1, Winter 1966.

[3] Silverman, Kaja. "Suture (excerpts)." *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology*, edited by Philip Rosen. Columbia UP, 1986, 219.

[4] Lyotard, "L'acinéma," 65. "Le film agit ainsi comme le miroir orthopédique dont Lacan a analysé [...], la fonction constitutive du sujet imaginaire."

[5] Ibid. "Mais le problème véritable [...] est de savoir *pourquoi il faut*, aux pulsions éparses sur le corps polymorphe, un objet où se réunir. Dans une philosophie de la conscience, ce dernier mot dit assez que cette exigence d'unification est donnée par hypothèse; elle est la tâche même d'une telle philosophie; dans une « pensée » de l'inconscient [...], la question de la production de l'unité, même imaginaire, ne peut plus manquer de se poser dans toute son opacité."

[6] Klossowski, Pierre. *La Révocation de l'Édit de Nantes*. Éditions de Minuit, 1959. In terms of publication dates, this novel was the second release. After the completion of the trilogy, Klossowski re-defined *La Révocation de l'Édit de Nantes* as prequel to the earlier *Roberte, ce soir.* Minuit, 1953.

[7] Op cit, 145. "Ne serait ce pas déjà un risque suffisant pour ma propre description, si elle ne s'appuyait sur la réalité matérielle du tableau, qu'elle laissât transpire rune rêverie morbide?"

[8] Ibid., 14–15. "Dans les motifs que représentent les quelques tableaux […] on reconnait une propension pour des scènes don't la violence est due à un savant dévoilement—non au dévoilé, non à la nudité, mais à l'instant en soi le moins pictural"; "[L]'oeil aime à se reposer sur un motif sans histoire, et notre artiste au contraire semble contrarier ce repos du regard en suggérant a l'esprit ce que la peinture dérobe. Mais comme il n'en est pas moins un connoisseur accompli de 'espace dans lequel se situe en tant que volume l'objet de son émotion, cette vision suggestive tient à son art du geste en suspens—au point que l'on pourrait croire qu'il a peint ses toiles d'apres des « tableaux vivants »"; "En effect, si le genre du tableau vivant n'est qu'une manière de comprendre le spectacle que la vie se donne à elle-même, que nous montre ce spectacle sinon la vie se réitérant pour se ressaisir dans sa chute, comme retenant son soufflé dans une appréhension instantanée de son origine; mais la réitération de la vie par elle-même resterait désespérée sans le simulacra de l'artiste qui, à reproduire ce spectacle, arrive à se délivrer lui-même de la réitération."

[9] Ibid., 12. "Quant à la parole? Sans doute à celle que le peintre suppose dite par ses personages, non moins qu'à celle du spectateur en train de contemplir la scène."

[10] Ibid., 16. "[L]a vie se donnant en spectacle à elle-même; de la vie demeurant en suspens…."

[11] Ibid., 12. "Mais s'il y a solécisme, si c'est quelque chose de contraire que les figures font entendre par un geste quelconque, il faut qu'elles dissent quelque chose pour que ce contraire soit sensible; mais peintes, elles se taisent; le spectateur parlerait-il donc pour elles, de facon à sentir la contraire du geste qu'il les voit fair? Reste toujours à savoir si, pour avoir peint pareils gestes, l'artiste voulait éviter le solécisme; ou si, à peindre le genre de scènes choisies, il cherchait en revanche à démontrer la positivité du solecisme qui ne s'exprimerait que par l'image."

[12] Deleuze, Gilles. *Logique du sens.* Minuit, 1969, 328. "Il s'agit pour lui de multiplier l'essence de Roberte, de créer autant de simulacres et de reflets de Roberte, qu'il y a de personnes entrant en rapport avec elle, et d'inspirer à Roberte une sorte d'émulation avec ses propres doubles, grâce auxquels Octave-voyeur la possède et la connaît mieux que s'il la gardait, toute simplifiée, pour lui- même."

[13] Ibid. "On ne possède bien que ce qui est exproprié, mis hors de soi, dédoublé. reflété sous le regard, multiplié par les esprits possessifs."

[14] Ibid. "Posséder, c'est donc donner à posséder, et *voir* ce donné, le voir se multiplier dans le don."

[15] Lyotard, *Discours, figure.* Klincksieck, 1971, 284. "La réalité n'est jamais qu'un secteur du champ imaginaire auquel nous avons accepté de renoncer, duquel nous avons accepté de désinvestir nos fantasmes de desir."

[16] Lyotard, "L'acinéma," 67. "Il est donc essentiel à cette fantasmatique d'être représentative, c'est-à-dire d'offrir au spectateur des instances d'identification, des formes reconnaissables, et pour tout dire matière à mémoire car c'est au prix, répétons-le, d'outrepasser celle-ci et de défigurer l'ordre de la propagation que se fera sentir l'émotion intense."

[17] Klossowski. *La Révocation de l'Édit de Nantes*, 56–57. "Encore cette image de soi, reflétée par le regard d'autrui, ne lui vient-elle que dans l'irrésistible montée du besoin de vivre qu'elle pense se devoir de refréner, besoin de se libérer de sa dignité, de cette dignité comme inscrite dans la régularité de ses traits."

[18] Lyotard, "L'acinéma," 67. "C'est le prix même que devrait payer le cinéma s'il allait au premier de ses extrêmes, l'immobilisation : car celle-ci (qui n'est pas l'immobilité) signifierait qu'il lui faut sans cesse défaire la synthèse convenue que tout mouvement cinématographique répand."

[19] Klossowski. *Nietzsche et le cercle vicieux.* Mercure, 1969, 194. "[O]n ne démystifie que pour mieux mystifier."

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Color and Meaning in Film: An Argument from Irony

PAOLO BABBIOTTI and ISABEL HERNÁNDEZ-GIL

Abstract: Allusions to color in film studies and philosophy of film rarely mention its major contributions. At best, color is seen as accessory, at worst, as sensory distraction from aesthetic and narrative content. Drawing from instances where color symbolism is deployed ironically, we argue that color is an essential component of meaning and authorial intention. By reversing the conventional symbolism of color, ironic filmmakers make of it more than arguments from aesthetic and stylistic purity are able to account for, and require specific analysis from a more inclusive perspective on the elements that make up the meaning and value of their works.

Keywords: Film, color, meaning, irony

Dismissive attitudes towards the use of color in film are prevalent in the study of visual arts, and find potential counterparts across philosophy and literature in the form of aversion to stylistic excess. In this paper, we identify two historical antecedents of this attitude, and point to irony as a major layer of aesthetic value and signification. We examine two clear instances where the meaning of color subverts its conventional usage, and compare them to the use of irony in literature. Without room for color, we suggest, ironic works can be, and have been, blatantly misinterpreted. Color is able to capture characters' opposing perspectives and the contradictory features of real and imaginary worlds, in a way that positively contributes to artworks' meaning and aesthetic value.

1. Color as Charm: The History of Aesthetic Purity

Let us begin by searching for the origins of the suspicion towards color, which stretch back to long before film was invented. Kant makes one of the most illustrative distinctions between color and the proper objects of aesthetic value in the *Critique of Judgment*, when he argues that

> it is not what gratifies in sensation but merely what pleases by its form, that is the fundamental prerequisite for taste. The colours which give brilliancy to the sketch are part of the charm. They may no doubt, in their own way, enliven the object for sensation, but make it really worth looking at and beautiful they cannot. The *charm* of colours, or of the agreeable tones of instruments, may be added: but the *design* in the former and the *composition* in the latter constitute the proper object of the pure judgement of taste. (CJ, §14, 226)

Here Kant delineates, but also presupposes, a significant difference between form – which he describes as the proper object of aesthetic taste – and charm, which merely serves to stimulate the senses. On this approach, charm compromises our appreciation of form: it might be subjectively pleasing, like the taste of an apple, but has no place in judgements of taste.

Tarkovsky, whose Kantian influence is patent, draws on a similar idea when he establishes an analogy between film and the sculpting of a marble block:

> Just as a sculptor takes a lump of marble, and, inwardly conscious of the features of his finished piece, removes everything that is not part of it — so the film-maker, from a 'lump of time' made up of an enormous, solid cluster of living facts, cuts off and discards whatever he does not need, leaving only what is to be an element of the finished film, what will prove to be integral to the cinematic image. (Tarkovsky 63-64)

For Tarkovsky, the director is like a sculptor, lending shape to what he considers to be the essence of film: the internal notion of time. This image is also implicit in the title "Sculpting in Time", in some languages translated as "Sculpting Time". Though it is not easy to find a uniform definition of what 'form' amounts to across different spheres of art, the metaphor is useful for our purposes: if film is a sculpture *in* time (or, as some translations of the title suggest, a sculpture *of* time) what are the *formal* aspects of film, and how do we distinguish that which serves no purpose – the non-essential? Tarkovsky gives a partial answer, mentioning montage, editing, and rhythm as essential features of film, insofar as they give form to the representation of internal time. Meanwhile, the *atmosphere* created in the film is relegated to a secondary status. Discussing *Stalker,* Tarkovsky writes:

> An atmosphere will come into being as a result of this concentration on what is most important. (The idea of creating atmosphere for its own sake seems to me strange). (Tarkovsky 194)

Now it is clear that atmosphere is at least in part given by color: the dull browns and lacklustre greens of Siberia, for instance, give the Zone its otherworldly aura. So again we are faced with the idea of color as something *additional* to what is being expressed – a certain subjective condition of time – and that artists should avoid giving too much attention to anything beyond what is strictly necessary to express it. Like Kant, Tarkovsky regards color as inessential, a feature aimed at "gratifying" the senses or even, as Stanley Cavell puts it "a new form of packaging, one which my occasional market research on the subject has convinced me is profitable" (Cavell 1979, 80), rather than an object of aesthetic appreciation. The affinities between Kant and Tarkovsky show that what might at first appear to be an Adornian attack on the commercial, marketable aspect of a new technological advance, in truth goes further back in history. We may refer to this approach to color as the "attack from aesthetic purity": the idea that color is something external to, and independent of, the formal properties of aesthetic objects, and not a proper object of aesthetic appreciation.

2. Meaning and Stylistic Purity

As we mentioned in passing, criticisms of color in the visual arts run parallel to those targeting certain stylistic qualities in written and spoken word. For instance, Antonioni reproduces Tarkovsky's point almost identically in a way that applies beyond the medium common to both:

> When one detaches a story from the words that express it, that make it an artistically complete narrative, what remains? There remains a story that is equivalent to a news story read in the newspaper, to a friend's story, to an event we had the opportunity to witness, to a birth of our fantasy. This is the new starting point. It is then a question of developing, shaping, articulating the raw material in another language, with all the consequences that the fact entails. Indeed at this point the original text can even get in the way. (Antonioni 72)

Replacing internal time in Tarkovsky's sculpture metaphor, here the content of the narrative is what remains after what is subjective and superfluous is stripped off. Even linguistic idiosyncrasies affect the essential meaning of the narrative, which is the "raw material" of the story. Tarkovsky would say that, in film, the story is given its shape by editing, montage, and rhythm. Atmosphere, we might add, would be an unnecessary addition on the part of the translator.

   This takes us to a parallel aversion to style that can be found in other disciplines. Let us draw an example from contemporary philosophy of language: the distinction between the Fregean concepts of *Sinn* (sense), *Bedeutung* (reference) and *Färbung* (coloring), of which only the first two serve to determine meaning of sentences. This analysis suggests that coloring (also called *tonality*, or *tone*) of a sentence is merely ornamental, and not central to its meaning. Truth and falsity are not affected by the tone of sentences. As Frege writes: "Somebody using the

sentence 'Alfred has still not come' actually says 'Alfred has not come', and at the same time hints at—but only hints at—the fact that Alfred's arrival is expected" (Frege 295). In Frege's example, tone hints at (and *only* hints at) a further meaning contained in the sentence 'Alfred has still not come'. However, it does not have the power to *change the meaning* of the sentence. As Maria Baghramian remarks in her paper "The Depths and Shallows of Philosophical Style" (Baghramian 312-313), this Fregean idea was also stressed by Michael Dummett, for instance, when he wrote: "The English sentences 'He has died', 'He is deceased', and 'He has passed away' do not differ in sense but only in tone. Likewise, where A and B are sentences, the complex sentences 'A and B' and 'Not only A but B' do not differ in sense, but in tone: if either one of them is true, so is the other, even if it conveys an inappropriate suggestion" (Dummett 13). As Dummett explicitly writes, tone is "an *inappropriate* suggestion". Investigating the meaning of sentences requires that we avoid being distracted by their *coloring.* Once again, in this line of the analytic tradition, as in some currents of contemporary cinema, style and color are thought of as fancy ornaments at best, and as distracting, "inappropriate" ornaments at worst. And in both philosophy and film, this dismissiveness towards color and style seems to be guided by an ideal of purity: *the purer, the better.* We henceforth refer to this as the argument from stylistic purity.

To extend this analysis to film, we need analogous candidates for the tone/content dichotomy. Certainly, our claim that color is akin to tone or to style – and therefore irrelevant to content – is neither surprising nor incompatible with the general attack on stylistic purity. The more urgent question is whether film can be said to carry meaning in a way that bears the relevant resemblances to literary texts, and whether this destabilizes in some measure the position of the aesthetic purist. Color symbolism is familiar to both film critics and art historians of all stripes. For instance, in his analysis of *Cries and Whispers,* P. Adams Stiney draws an analogy between Bruno Bettleheim's interpretation of red/white symbolism in art and its role in Bergman's film:

> What meaning? Let us begin at the end and work our way backwards. The autumnal colors invoke the consummation of the seasons, a gorgeous dying of nature. It is fall (or Swedish summer); the penultimate flaring of color tonality, just before the vegetal death, corresponds to the recovery immanent in Anna's reading of Agnes's words. It is not a rebirth, a spring; rather, it is a repetition in a different register of the temporality of the whole film. But now we know Agnes from the perspective of her death, so the flashback describes a liminal zone, where memory is under the sign of death even if it is gorgeous in its prolongation of the end. (Adams Stiney 40)

To go back to the metaphor deployed by Antonioni: the criticism from stylistic purity pre-supposes that color and atmosphere are added *after* the new language has been shaped – in Tarkovsky's technologies of time, and in the case of literature, in terms of conventional meaning – rather than in the process of sculpting the story. A helpful image suggested by painting is that of adding color after providing the outline, to make the painting realistic, visually attractive or, as Cavell suggests, commercially successful. Of course, color might not be all filmmakers' preferred stylistic device, in the same way that visual imagery, or detailed description, may not be an authors' style of choice. Some, like Frege, believe that style is ornament, and that one should restrict oneself to the bare minimum. But what if tone could affect the *content* of what we say – or, *contra* Tarkovsky, of what we film? In that case, the strict separation between meaning and style would be a misguided enterprise, as would Tarkovsky's insistence that the atmosphere is a "collateral" addition.

Now in art history, formal aspects are also separated from content in terms of meaning, where the latter is given either by conventional symbolism or by new symbols included in the authors' imagery through repetition. Meaning, depending on how far we are willing to push the linguistic analogy, is *what* the author says, or at any rate what the work says as a whole. Style, on the other hand, is ornament, and part of *how* the message is conveyed. The following section strives to show that this distinction restricts the kind of points that authors – and filmmakers

– are able to make. We suggest studying irony as an illustration of the way in which color, in film as well as in literature, becomes essential to the interpretation of meaning, both in local examples of meaning and the more complex messages that authors can effectively convey.

3. Color Irony in Film and Literature

Vladimir Nabokov, one of the major stylists of the twentieth century, infused his most renowned novel with excellent examples of stylistic irony. Despite its commercial success, *Lolita* was profusely criticised and often dubbed 'pornographic'. In an infamous review, Oliver Prescott gives two reasons why it does not merit any reader's attention:

> The first is that it is dull, dull, dull in a pretentious, florid and archly fatuous fashion. The second is that it is repulsive. (Prescott)

We want to focus, firstly, on the second of Prescott's criticisms, the harrowing attack on style. Consider the following passage, in which Humbert describes the fantasy of having a grandchild with Lolita:

> [...] The thought that with patience and luck I might have her [Lolita] produce eventually a nymphet with my blood in her exquisite veins, a Lolita the Second, who would be eight or nine around 1960, when I would still be *dans la force l'âge* indeed the telescope of my mind, or un-mind, was strong enough to distinguish in the remoteness of time a *vieillard encore vert* (old still green) – or was it green rot? – bizarre, tender, salivating Dr Humbert, practicing on a supremely lovely Lolita the Third, the art of being a granddad. (Nabokov 176)

Now it is clear that in a way Prescott's description of Nabokov's style is not exactly wrong. It is also one of the many passages that bring out Humbert's revolting immorality. Moreover, Humbert appears to revel in this: he doesn't seem bothered by an image that, to the average reader, is contemptible to say the least. But what of his self-description in this passage? He imagines his future, middle-aged self as a "vieillard encore vert" – a pun that only works in French, but quite effectively. On one hand, a *vieillard vert* is an old man who is inappropriately sexual, especially towards young girls. On the other hand, a man who is *encore* (still) green is immature. So Humbert plays on the double aspect of being gleefully youthful, on the one hand, and contemptibly old, on the other. There is not simply playfulness, but also irony, in the narrator's voice. The image of "salivating Dr Humbert" also points us in this direction: Humbert's third-person self-characterizations are loaded with the very words and qualifications that Nabokov expects the reader to attribute to him, as Prescott does. But Humbert's self-complacency is patent in his playfulness: his sheer grandiloquence, what Prescott calls "a vocabulary that would astound the editors of the Oxford Dictionary" (Prescott), and an overall style described as "self-consciously ornate". Lastly, Prescott condemns those stylistic choices that he attributes to Nabokov directly: the choice, for instance, of calling a girls' school "St. Algebra", supposedly revealing a lack of self-consciousness in the author himself (ibid).

Contra Prescott – who arguably misinterprets irony – Nabokov's choice of style drastically conditions what we should take not only Humbert, but also his creator, to say: while Humbert's suggestions are admittedly repulsive, a deeper layer of irony is found at the level of the novel as a whole. Consider Nabokov's reply to a question concerning the alleged 'immorality' of *Lolita,* in a 1961 interview gathered in the collection *Think, Speak, Write*:

> On the contrary. It has a very moral moral: don't harm children. Now, Humbert does. We might defend his feelings for Lolita, but not his perversity. (Nabokov 300)

We want to highlight two things about this declaration. First, that whatever moral is alluded to in his brief assertion, should be interpreted as part of the *author's meaning* in the book as a whole.

In philosophy of language this might be interpreted as the speaker's meaning, as opposed to sentence meaning, or the conventional meaning of individual words and passages within the text. It is not Humbert's moral, nor is it anywhere included in his declarations. That authors can convey a message over and above their characters' assertions is no mystery. As Noël Carroll accurately words it,

> Authors, in fact, often make political (Gorky's *Mother*), philosophical (Sartre's *Nausea*), and moral (James's *The Ambassadors*) points through their literary writings. This is a commonly known, openly recognized, and frequently discussed practice in our literary culture... there is no reason to believe that in every case the implicit points found in literary works are merely the notions of a fictional speaker or an implied author rather than the actual author. (Carroll 166)

We may contrast this with the meaning of more local words, aspects, and particles of the book which arguably gave rise to Prescott's interpretation: because Nabokov makes Humbert the explicit narrator of the story, he overlooks Nabokov's satirical overtones. Were the book *amoral,* it would either have *no* meaning as a whole, or no meaning concerning morality. Second, readers have often misread the meaning or intention behind *Lolita*. This is presumably the case of the interviewer, and of all those who accused Nabokov of *immorality*, as though the book were an apology of Humbert's misbehavior. These critics can be seen as having misinterpreted the ironic resources, stylistic and otherwise, with which the book is fraught. It is as though, upon someone ironically saying something immoral, an audience misconstrued their meaning upon failing to notice their ironic tone; their overtly exaggerated vocabulary; their deliberate violation of a Gricean maxim.[3] This shows that Prescott – as well as those who accused not the book, but the author himself, of being immoral – may have been reading a level too shallow, missing out on the not-so-superficial problem of style.

Our hunch that these are both good instances of irony has not yet been substantiated. But for a parallel with familiar examples of irony in conversation, consider the following example of local irony from Kieślowski's *A Short Film About Killing:*

> "What, in your view, deters crime?" — "In general terms, it is the impact of punishment not on the criminal, but on the others to discourage them. Shall I put it precisely?" — [Yes] — "It is a deterrent though the convict... or, even, the convict is the deterrent. It intimidates others. Article 50 of the Penal Code". — "I dislike your ironic tone..." (Kieślowski 1988)

This is a part of the colloquium between Piotr, a somewhat idealist figure hoping to change the Polish legal system, and one of the examiners during the oral assessment that should qualify him as a lawyer. As noted by his interlocutor, Piotr is being ironic: he doesn't really think that punishment deters crime. And as we anticipated, only Piotr's ironic tone lets his intended meaning shine through. But the elephant in the room in this conversation, and in the film as a whole, is Kieślowski's condemnation of the brutality of the capital punishment. The placement of this very scene in the context of the film is also ironic. Piotr's passionate words against capital punishment come right after the scene where Jacek, the young murderer-to-be, throws stones from a bridge over the road, causing a major accident whose (probably lethal) effects we never see. Would the new lawyer be so sure of his defence, had he witnessed Jacek's a seamlessly cruel and light-hearted act? Presumably, he would have given the same answer given at the beginning of the film, when asked about his legal vocation: "I don't know anymore". His world, like Jacek's world (which is more complex than the scene in which the stone is thrown might lead one to believe) is ambivalent.

Throughout the film, shot through green filters, we see a blended world, through which Kieślowski intended to communicate a meaning opposite to the one attached to green conventionally: cruelty and dullness, rather than hope. The world of (conventional) color is overturned, impregnating the film with Kieślowski's rather cynical irony. In Shakespearean

comedies, the Green World was the place reserved for magical occurrences which twisted the plot of the comedy (a prime example is the green forest of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*).[4] Kieślowski's film *ends* with green: Piotr desperately crying in a green meadow before the forest (allegedly the meadow where Jacek's sister died, as Jacek revealed to Piotr before the execution). The effect is unsettling. What is conventionally thought of as a peaceful and lively, sometimes magical space works as a backdrop for Piotr's death and sorrow. Analogously, what is thought of as the best way of preventing murder (capital punishment) is in fact revealed to be the most dreadful crime. The equivalent of Nabokov's moral, in the case of Kieślowski, is found in the very title of the work, which alludes to one of the ten commandments: *Thou Shalt Not Kill*.[5] The overarching irony here is that, whereas Polish law is supposedly inflicting punishment for the violation of the sixth commandment, in the retributive "eye for an eye" fashion of the Old Testament, it is precisely Polish society that Kieślowski is condemning. All of the hope, goodness

and restoration of evil we would expect from green as a symbol of hope is replaced with the dull, hopeless cruelty of Kieślowski's filters. Without such ironic undertones, *A Short Film About Killing* would not be able to reach such depth and profundity. A profundity that lies in placing the spectators between two worlds and making them *zig zag* between them – as in the marvellous scene where Piotr is *zig zaging* on his scooter between the light and the dark sections of the screen. He is happy that he just became a lawyer and wanders exultantly in the city. Even in that joyful moment – as the presence of the opposite tones signal – the spectator is reminded of the double nature of our world, which is at once hopeful and cruel.

4. Irony and Authorial Intent

The foregoing analyses of *Lolita* and *A Short Film About Killing* encompass two levels of ironic meaning: firstly, the level at which characters utter individual statements, and second, the level at which authors convey their point over and above explicit texts and images, and even symbols charged with conventional meaning. As Carroll suggests,

> These points are very often secured through oblique techniques – implication, allegory, presupposition, illustration (unaccompanied with explicative commentary), and so on. That is, such points need not be and often are not directly stated. (Carroll 166)

The moral drawn from the previous section was that style and color should be regarded as two of the 'oblique techniques' through which the authors' meaning is conveyed. This is clearly shown in the moral of *Lolita,* which Nabokov confirms in his interview, and in the alternative title of *A Short Film About Killing:* thou shall not kill, but even murder, Kieślowski implies, should be forgiven. These 'points' are made over and above the characters, who may have other things to say about the issues at stake. More importantly, they are made in a way that would not have been possible without their authors' oblique use of irony.

We turn, finally, to a more lighthearted use of color irony in film, one with a message that is neither political nor moral, but which still requires reading an ironic tone in its uses of color. We are speaking of Wes Anderson's *Moonrise Kingdom,* a coming-of-age period piece entirely shot in blue and yellow. The vibrant hues of yellow are the colors of happiness and joy, and

are conventionally associated with young age. In this film, the protagonists are children who escape from their oppressive families, but they are ambiguously portrayed as though they were already adults. Their characters are made to contrast with a nasty figure, interpreted by Tilda Swinton, and given the name "Social Service". The irony implicit in the name is patent; what is more, Social Service consistently dresses herself in blue, a color conventionally associated with calm and peace.[6] Anderson's unconventional use of blue in *Moonrise Kingdom* is prevalent. In fact, the scene condensing most of the tension and danger in the film (the one where two children, trapped on the top of a tower, threaten with suicide) is entirely shot in a way that reveals Anderson's irony towards the world that he conveys. They are in danger, but the whole moment is immersed in a metallic blue, which gives an air of security and calm. Soon we will discover that what threatens them – the adult world embodied in the figure of Social Service – is not really as terrible as they think. In fact, Social Service herself offers them a way out of their troubles. The juxtaposition of contrasting colors could have denoted an opposition between good and evil (yellow and blue), but in this context it works as a means to exploring the complexity of the characters, and of the world that we inhabit: we are reminded of the subjective sense of danger present in childhood, and of the objective security that we perceive in it as adults. Anderson thus avoids every hint of Manicheism, and reveals that what is truly frightful about childhood is not what children believe – it is the evanescence of it. And what is frightful about adulthood is the nostalgia into which our memories of childhood plunge us.

Now on one account of the aesthetic use of irony, one could suggest that color – as well as style – is simply a means of securing the message at the higher level of authorial intention, in the same way one might change one's tone, like Piotr in his remarks about punishment, to indicate that one means the opposite to what is said. But even when irony is a representation of an illocutionary act performed by a fictional character[8], we suggest the following examples of irony at a higher level of authorial meaning and intent:

Color	Conventional meaning	Local meaning	Global authorial intention
bizarre, tender, salivating Dr Humbert	self-contempt	self-complacency	moral condemnation of Humbert Humbert
green	hope, change, rebirth	Jacek will not be spared	condemnation of death penalty
blue	security and calm	danger	subjective danger, objective security

In the cases at hand, the last column of our table suggests something *more than* either of the columns on the left hand side. What the author bestows upon the text – or film – are new ways of looking at all of the features to the left, and at the world we are shown through the screen. Nabokov, as we saw in our extract from the interview, provides a new way of looking at Humbert's *feelings,* which is both understanding and unforgiving. Humbert is not torn between

good and evil, between lust and moral condemnation, but Nabokov, together with the charitable reader, is. His consistent use of style – the pedantry, the lewd imagery, the inappropriate details of which Humbert is not entirely self-conscious – makes the novel a kind of caricature, but it does so while bringing Nabokov's uncomfortable compassion into the picture.

Through color, just as Piotr does by changing the tone in his voice, authors display irony insofar as they say something opposite to what is meant (Brown and Levinson 80). But our central contribution is the suggestion that these instances of irony are meant to shed light on the contradictions inherent in real life. The common ground of our examples is that their authors take up a double perspective on the world, with the film-specific upshot that this can be done immediately: in one shot one may superimpose color – say, green, as in the shot from *A Short Film About Killing* – and a strikingly contrasting image – such as the smiling lawyer on the motorcycle. Visually, this is as aesthetically important as any other element involved. Going back to Kant, for instance, we may argue that the table, with its three layers of codependent meaning, captures aspects of film that are as 'formal' as any combination of shapes, harmonies, or narrative structures. Or, if we take on a value-maximising approach to interpretation[7] – on which the aim is to obtain as much aesthetic satisfaction from its objects, we might say that the ability of color to contrast several perspectives, or several meanings of the same sign, is conducive to what Nabokov called "aesthetic bliss", with "curiosity, tenderness, kindness and ecstasy" – the value he attributed to writing and reading *Lolita.* Our purpose in this paper is not to determine the value of irony, nor to study its necessary and sufficient conditions. Our point is that *if* our examples of irony can pump our intuitions as we suggest they do, then color is as valuable a resource, aesthetically and visually, as any other component of aesthetic value and signification. It doesn't simply mean something other than what the character says explicitly: it is also a way of showing how the world surrounding them may contradict itself. That film is able to capture these aspects visually, narratively, and with all the sensitivity of examined experience, is as strong an argument for the aesthetic value of color as that of any other element could be.

5. Conclusion

In the first two sections of this paper, we identified several sources of aversion to color in film, charm in the visual arts and style in literature and philosophy. We then gave two examples where color is essential to the interpretation of authorial intention, therefore contributing to determining meaning. Both Kieślowski and Anderson provide filters through which to contemplate the naturally colored world: Poland is as cruel and unforgiving as it is (through Piotr's efforts) tentative at justice, and Jacek is as ruthless as he is tender and loved. Likewise, the boy scout children of *Moonrise Kingdom* are less and yet more complicated than young adults; less and yet more capable of getting themselves in danger and of achieving ordinary salvation. Without color as a vehicle for communicating irony, not just the author's intended meaning, but also the insight it provides, would be irretrievably lost.

University of Genoa, Northwestern Italian Philosophy Consortium (FINO), Italy
& University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK

Notes

[1] Grice is a clear counterexample to Frege within the analytic tradition. Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson, for instance, interpret irony as a violation of the Maxim of Quality, using other potential clues to convey the intended meaning. This reading supports our analogy, pointing to various conversational phenomena with which we draw parallels in the sections that follow.

[2] A discussion on the Green World and on its role in the genre of the Hollywood Comedy of Remarriage is to be found in Cavell 1981 and Cavell 2004. For the origin of the term Green World see Frye 1957.

[3] This title is preserved in the shorter version included under the *Decalogue* Kieślowski's series on the Ten Commandments, and in various translations.

[4] The conventional meaning of blue is discussed by Pastoureau: "Comme il est docile, comme il est discipliné! Le bleu est une couleur si sage, qui se fonde dans le paysage, et ne se fait pas remarquer" (Pastoureau 13).

[5] That artworks are representations of illocutionary acts by fictional characters and implied speakers is held by Beardsley (Carroll 167). Carroll suggests artworks can also be performances of illocutionary acts themselves (Carroll 165). This would respond to the authorial intention referenced in the right hand column of our table.

[6] Note that value-maximising views are sometimes taken to contrast actual intentionalism, on which we based some of our claims about the relevance of authorial intention to interpretation. For this reason we take the relevance of irony in a value-maximising theory of interpretation to support our point regardless of our position in the debate about intention and interpretation.

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Phenomenology of Film Experience in Relation to Corporeal Involvement in the World[1]

KATARZYNA WEICHERT

Abstract: How does a film affect the sensuality and corporeality of the viewer? This question is raised by modern researchers concerned with phenomenological theory of film and the embodied viewer. They mostly rely on Maurice Merleau-Ponty's findings, according to which we – corporeally embedded in the world – project the field of potential gaze and motion, we grasp the expression of a gesture. Such conceptions, as Daniel Yacavone states, do not consider the film as a work of art; they focus on basic visuality (and aurality) of film. In this vein, Vivian Sobchack limits her theory. She describes film in the categories of embodied perception: she treats it as a vision of the world offered from within, with a specific point of view, directing the attention, grasp of a gesture. In order to broaden this perspective I refer to Hermann Schmitz's new phenomenology. His concept of the embodied subject, the sensitivity open for the world, and also the concept of the world experienced through atmospheric drives or ambiguous sensations, allows the conceptual apprehension of many elusive phenomena, which cinematography has learned to skilfully exploit.

Keywords: Embodied viewer, new phenomenology, being affected, film experience

In phenomenological film theory, there is growing interest in the category of embodiment, the embodied viewer, and one of the major issues are the question of corporeal, sensory experience of the film, and the question – raised by Daniel Yacavone – about how the viewers are connected to their own corporeality through the film. There are plenty of publications and books concerning this topic – such as *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses* by Laura U. Marks, Dana Polan (2000), *The Tactile Eye: Touch and the Cinematic Experience* by Jennifer M. Barker (2009), *Carnal Thoughts Embodiment and Moving Image Culture* by Vivian Sobchack (2016), among which Sobchack's work *The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience* (1990) is particularly influential.

However, these authors point out that the topic requires further attention (especially in Anglo-Saxon literature). Such things as the status of sensory experiences related to film experience, or how to explain the effect of an audio-visual work on the living, multisensory corporeality of the viewer, and yet open this issue for the question of influence of film as a work of art, remain unclear. Perhaps it does not require creating a specific theory of embodied film, but thinking about living corporeality in its passive openness and sensory involvement, and visual and audial qualities in their effective capacity. In this article I shall present Sobchack's concept of embodied film in reference to Merleau-Ponty together with doubts raised by Daniel Yacavone, and then I shall propose Hermann Schmitz's concept of living corporeality – the affected (touched) being – as yet unexplored tool for description of the film experience.

Embodied Perception

Phenomenological film theories focusing on corporeality are mainly based on Maurice Merleau-Ponty's concept of embodied perception. According to him, the access to the world is mostly

sensory and corporeal. The body is the background for all actions and activities. It determines the ability to focus, to turn to objects and persons that surround me. Thus it is the environment that defines and designs the area for potential actions. It utilises basic intentionality. By turning to an object, it distinguishes it in its field of observation and motion, it projects itself on it in order for the intentionality to occur: "The gesture of reaching one's hand out toward an object contains a reference to the object, not as a representation, but as this highly determinate thing toward which we are thrown, next to which we are through anticipation, and which we haunt"[2]. In other words, it incorporates it into the scope of its motion. It can be described as functional recognition of one's environment in one's body. This also applies to reception of any phenomena and qualities. They are never neutrally granted, they are always available through a certain approach. Therefore they are shaped motorically, primarily received through corporeal assimilation. Body gets attuned to the received stimulus. Sensations, caused by e.g. the sight of a certain colour, are not simply acts of registration of qualities, but – according to the philosopher – a particular way of being. He indicates that the body, with particular muscles, reacts differently to reception of the colours red and yellow, versus blue and green. He interprets adduction and abduction as the body pulling towards a stimulus or turning away from it, withdrawing. Thus the impressions do not create a mental state, but they affect motor activity: they are perceived together with the corporeal reaction to them. Corporeal reception of stimuli, ie. concurrence of perception and corporeal reaction can be described as the beginning of its understanding.

Therefore, according to Merleau-Ponty, the body is a tool for understanding – at least – of the perceived world. Assuming a certain attitude – in the moment of turning towards an object – determines its surroundings and ability to act and experience. Thus it defines a preliminary sphere of meanings. Movements of the body appear to be a membrane, vibrating and translating impressions into appropriate meanings: "is this strange object that uses its own parts as a general system of symbols for the world and through which we can thus 'frequent' this world, 'understand' it, and find a signification for it"[3]. The meaning behind gestures and therefore intentions of another person is recognised in the same way. Such gestures and other acts are treated as forms of expression, expressed through the body. The meanings they carry create the world between the gesturing persons, upon which realm the speech is also based.

Body is observing and observed both as immersed in the world and operating within it. It does not perceive itself as transparent – it cannot see itself as a whole. It rather remains unseen as a condition and background for its actions. It is also entitled among other bodies and in relation to them (in a determined structure of direction, like top–down), which is particularly apparent in experiencing depth. Mutual interruption of objects is a proof of irreducibility of perspective and determines the place of embodied gaze.

This corporeal immersion in the world is explained and exposed through human expression, particularly in works of art. Painting allows to reveal a web of relations between things, and primarily the relationship between them and the human as a corporeal being, observing and observed. The painter's capable eyes see what is visible in the world, and also its spaciousness, connections between things, depth, and balance (or lack thereof). The painter transforms the visible and invisible aspects of the world, in other words – perceives what the world is missing for it to become a two-dimensional work of art through the use of paint[4]. Visibility appears under the painter's brush through touch, through a gesture stemming from observing and transforming the visibility through the painter's body, through cooperation of the eye and the hand.

Embodied Film Perception

In this spirit Sobchack presents the sensory nature of film and links it to the viewer's corporeality. In her book *The Address of the Eye* she presents film as an immanent vision of a consciousness

immersed in the presented world. In other words, what we view is a perception of the film, which – limited to a fragment of the given world, shown from a certain perspective – reveals visible things, their relation to other things, the depth, and it indicates their meaning by drawing attention to them in its field of perception. Thus the elements become a part of this world, and through it – a story. A film shows us the world from within and – according to Sobchack – in this lies the power of the cinematic medium and its capacity of offering a direct, embodied experience: "what I am suggesting here is that the power of the medium and its ability to communicate the experience of embodied and enworlded vision resides in the experience common to both film and spectator"[5].

Film perception – the activity of exposing a gesture and focusing on objects – is offered for viewing. Sobchack treats the relationship between the audience and the film as a dialogous meeting of the viewing and viewed bodies. The offered vision does not belong to the viewer – it is separate from them, it can also be more or less confrontational and unpleasant. This independence and internal – with regard to the presented world – perception grants the film its subjectivity (or quasi-subjectivity) and makes it more than just an observed object. Moreover, Sobchack attributes a consciousness to film with a consciousness, as long as it is an embodied consciousness – perceiving and expressing its perception:

> In this process of description, the existence of that "other seeing being" that is the film has been posited as constituting embodied subjectivity: "the sense of perception a semiology of meaning from within". This "sense of perception" has also been revealed as expressive, capable of signifying in the world and to others its own and the world's significance[6].

Film creates perception and expression of experiencing the world and becoming, which transcends the direct perceptual experience of the author. It exposes the space "there where we view" or "there where the eye [of the camera] is" as a sensory, intentional space, an area of potential actions. It is observed by the viewer as corporeally inhabited and experienced, but by someone else. The viewer peeps on it, because it is not their own experience of being in the world; they are aware of exposing the experienced expression of perception. We could say that living perception becomes transformed. Like in the case of painting the tool for this transformation was the painter's sensitive body, their eye and hand, in cinematic art the world is transformed in the eye of the camera and the whole technology associated with film. We cannot forget about the bodies of film creators, who – according to Sobchack – play a lesser part. Transformation would therefore rely mainly on exposing and broadcasting the experienced existence – untamed perception which now allows us to view it from within.

Film experience is based on perceiving the body as a carrier of expression, which appears through a series of sensory symptoms – a film is an analogon of human experience as significant and embodied[7]. The viewer, however, not only observes the embodied perception of the film, but their whole body participates in this experience. They receive it with their whole sensory reserve, relying on full physical access to the world (and cultural resources, or memory, as Laura Marks points out[8]) along with smell, touch, and grasping such properties as weight, size, texture, or sense of gravity[9]. As an example of such potential involvement, the author recalls her own film experience while watching *The Piano* (1993). She found the first scene particularly intense, where the gaze was inscribed in the body, shown from a subjective, intimate perspective.

> As I watched The Piano's opening moments in that first shot, before I even knew there was an Ada and before I saw her from my side of her vision [...] something seemingly extraordinary happened […] What I was seeing was, in fact, from the beginning, not an unrecognizable image, however blurred and indeterminate in my vision, however much my eyes could not "make it out". [...] my fingers comprehended that image, grasped it with a nearly imperceptible tingle of attention and anticipation and, offscreen, "felt themselves" as a potentiality in the subjective and fleshy situation figured onscreen[10].

Here, the author describes a particularly perceptual impression, which incorporated the experience of her own body into the process of watching. She shows that sight is not isolated from other senses, but that it (together with hearing) grants the multisensory, experiencing body an access to the world of the film. This is why Sobchack describes the viewer as the synaesthetic subject, ie. one in which certain sensory experiences are translated into other senses. It is also coenaesthetic, which means that different senses in their corporeal unity heighten certain experiences (or diminish them)[11].

Status of sensory experiences such as touch or smell is ambiguous – no matter how suggestively the smell of magnolia or taste of a dish is described, the viewer's memory or sensation is not the literal experience of smelling. Thus it would constitute an imagination, or a quasi-impression. Still, it is an experience that cannot be reduced to two senses: sight and hearing. In my opinion, senses should not be treated as separate, but inseparable from the experiencing body; as such that engage the body, but also as such that originate in the body, depend on it. Another problem, but also a characteristic feature of film experience, is immersion, drawing the viewer's attention towards the film events and its sensory world. Thus the viewer's sensations, their experiencing of their own body, are dispersed. Even if sensual experiences can be enhanced, they are localised "there", or in some contrast to "here". The author describes this paradox on the example of strong haptics of the woolen fabric shown, and her own sensations of touching a silk shirt. Her own body becomes the background for appearing film figures, it is an invisible side of haptic perception. The author states that "the cinesthetic subject feels his or her literal body as only one side of an irreducible and dynamic relational structure of reversibility and reciprocity that has as its other side the figural objects of bodily provocation on the screen"[12]. This exchange and reversibility is not always harmonious, it can also be disrupted, especially in intense, unpleasant, or even violent scenes.

Film as a Work of Art

Describing a film as an analogon of human perception and defining the relationship between the viewer and the film as a dialogue between two observing and observed perceptions is controversial. According to Yacavone, identifying the eye of the camera with living perception is linked to "all encompassing 'functional analogy' between the suggested material and prere-flectively experienced presence of a film – its 'body' – and the human body"[13] and the possibility of communication is based on similarity between the activity of the eye of the camera and human perception towards their surroundings. Giving the film subjectivity, focusing on technological potential to create film perception, is supposed to dismiss the questions concerning the author, their style, and the film's effect as a creative unity – a work of art.

I think that recognising subjectivity of the film shows the immanence of cinematic vision, where all revelations expose the meaning, show the significance of a given element in the world of the film or the depicted story, anticipate actions and events, and which always occur from a certain perspective and because of it[14]. It allows to treat a film as establishing its own worldliness. Some doubts may arise from the question about how the embodied perception of a film is supposed to be an extension of human perception – as Laura Marks interprets this concept[15] – and to what extent it can be creatively transformed. Does showing the separate (quasi) subjectivity of film not signify separation from the limited human perception? Sobchack replies that film confronts the viewer with a nonhuman perspective:

> Nonetheless, insofar as the film's material conditions for providing access to the world, accomplishing the commutation of perception and expression, and constituting or signifying a significant coherence are different from our own, they provide us actual and possible modes of becoming other than we are. Thus, even as human bodies engage the film's body in an always correlated activity (whether of filmmaking or spectating), the film's material body also always engages us in its possibilities as a nonhuman lived-body[16].

Yet the author sees this separation mostly in the concrete materiality of the cinematic apparatus, less so in the intention and creative work of the authors.

Film is not so much an extension of perception, but it rather appeals "to our power tacitly to decipher the world or men and to coexist with them. […] A movie is not thought; it is perceived"[17], as Merleau-Ponty states. Yet Yacavone points out that film, or rather technology and physical aspects of the medium, is not automatically capable of embodiment or representation of the processes of experienced perception. Neither does it simply refer to natural objects of perception or sensory experiences, but it is an audiovisual work. It offers the viewers a vision, grants specific access to the world and story it shows – in the framework of certain camera work, editing, configuration, and defined time. It appeals to perception understood as a silent ability to grasp meanings of gestures, yet it does not mean that it reproduces it directly. Recreating a bodily experience, approaching the intimate perception engaged in the world of life is the same film construct as distancing from it. It is more important to skillfully manipulate the viewers' attention, to manage perception in order to efficiently lead the viewer – by engaging them emotionally, corporeally and intellectually – through a given story.

Yacavone also emphasises that Merleau-Ponty was concerned with film as a work of art which not only uses mechanisms of perception, but relies on its own rules of construction[18]. It is a purposefully organised unity which changes in time, so that the presented world and its meaning are successively revealed through particular relations between the parts of the whole. Subsequent images determine their meaning, a previous scene can foreshadow the following scene – the meaning develops in time (a film is a temporal Gestalt). We should add that montage and camera movement allows for creative configuration of the content through manipulation of the order of images, length of takes, sound, or just colour (white balance), which are synthesised in specific rhythm.

A film has its own rhythm, which is perceived and palpable, and which constitutes the distinction of cinematic aesthetics and expression. However, this does not mean that a film (even one distanced from the conditions of human perception) cannot be experienced by a living body, that it does not stimulate the body in its multisensorics, and that the process of embodiment does not occur. At the end of his considerations Yacavone states that the question of sensory-affective film experience and connecting the viewers with their own corporeality is open[19]. A helpful lead could be New Phenomenology by Herman Schmitz, which offers a particular expression of affective, emotional and corporeal involvement in the world, in which sight (together with other senses) triggers corporeal communication. It does not offer a particular film theory, but rather it describes anew the relationship between an embodied human and their world.

Corporeality as Sensitivity and Openness for Sensory Phenomena

The New Phenomenology project, expanded into ten-volume *System der Philosophie* (1964–1980) offers a systematic phenomenology of the feeling body and embodied experience as well as sensuality of the world. The system is based on rich and detailed historical exposition, studying and reinterpretation of classical philosophy and references to various research, analyses of experiences and art. New Phenomenology is developed within Die Gesellschaft für Neue Phänomenologie and applied in different fields, such as medicine, psychiatry, art history or architecture. I shall briefly present the way of understanding the body and being in the world together with possible film references; unfortunately this is no place for presenting broad argumentation and system foundations.

Feeling body

Corporeality is a way of being in the world that realises the feeling nature of involvement in the world. It is not a separate place with a closed structure, but a feeling expanse – exposure to the world. The feeling body (*Leib*) is understood as an area with no set boundaries, a surfaceless

space, felt as own. It is not defined by sensory control, e.g. it is not the boundary of skin determined by sight, but through senses this feeling may intensify, broaden, weaken, etc. Body is not limited by geometric requirements of objectively determined space, but it anchors within it in the absolute place[20]. It can be described as a nonrational, nonmeasurable place of feeling oneself, which is not limited by reversible relations of remoteness and distance. It is determined on the basis of feeling of one's own body and spontaneous motion. Body is a felt sphere, self-finding, an expanse with various points of intensity. It has its own dynamics, its vital drive, which occurs between contraction (*Engung*) and expansion (*Weitung*)[21]. Feeling and recognition of the "here" happens mostly through contraction inhibiting the expansion, so characteristic of experiences of pain and anxiety. Contractions and expansions constitute the peculiar corporeal dialogue and are understood as opposing, overlapping or exclusive forces. They react to what is encountered in the environment, and are stimulated by it. In case of sitting at the table, e.g. a rectangular one, corporeal involvement with the table does not only mean observing its size or shape, but also sensing the potential to expand, sort of sliding across the counter. Top of the table is the field for potential expansion. Schmitz defines this phenomenon as corporeal direction (*Richtung*), which – through expansion – progresses from contraction to expansion.

By sticking to the example of an affected being sat at the table, we can notice further overlapping tendencies. The inhibiting contraction determined by the solid mass of the table can be a force competing with distancing. Schmitz calls this antagonism (contraction versus expansion) tension (*Spannung*), while an opposite situation, when expansion competes with contraction, is welling (*Schwellung*)[22].

The contrast of this experience can be also observed in the film *The Piano*: in the beach scene, when Ada puts her hand through a small hole in the box, places it on piano keys and starts to play. Solid mass of the box introduces blocking tendency, yet touch of the keys, gentleness of her hand and spatiality of sound introduce vastness. The heroine's hand and face are presented separately, outside of the inhibiting pressure of the weight and inaccessibility of the box. Because of this contrast, along with visual isolation of the heroine's body from her hand and its exposition, the scene has a strong haptic effect. The effect of shutting off the external conditions and the feeling of intimacy and safety was further enhanced audially: in the moment of inserting the hand, the sounds of the sea and the rest of the environment fell silent. The scene was violently interrupted (corporeal communication being interrupted as well) by the intrusion of the sea with its visual, audial and haptic vehemence, drowning the piano and Ada playing it.

The play between these forces (contraction versus expansion) can assume various intensity and proportions. There is a difference between breathing, when the dynamic is in balance, and the situation in which one of the drives is dominant, e.g. tension of pain or anxiety. In this situation contraction is the agony of inhibiting an expansive impulse. In order to illustrate welling, the philosopher presents a series of situations, mostly linked to feelings of pleasure, like during sexual arousal, but also when taking a deep breath outside or watching a horror film; or to emotions accompanying a carousel ride. The play between the two tendencies can progress in two modes: intense or rhythmic. However, usually one side is dominant – it determines the nature of the whole play. This is how the philosopher differentiates between feelings of anxiety and fear. Anxiety is played out between rhythmic tension and welling, while pulsating in fear is caused by pauses. The philosopher defines phenomena opposing the competing ones as privative contraction or privative expansion. They are characterised by mutual disengagement from each other and thus from the corporeal dynamics. In the case of contraction, the phenomenon is so powerful and sudden that it blocks the expansive impulse. Anxiety is painful because contraction inhibits the expansive impulse, tension competes against welling, but in sudden terror it is disengaged from expansion. It is worth noting that in horror films, the characters in climactic moments are often presented in extreme close-ups, only their faces are shown, and the space becomes eliminated, which creates the effect of e.g. suffocating (like in *The Blair Witch Project* from 1990). Privative

expansion, on the other hand, means release from contraction, which Schmitz describes as alleviation, feeling of gladness while watching a beautiful view, or relief.

The structure of corporeal dynamics is further differentiated by protopathic and epicritic tendencies[23]. The protopathic tendencies are characterised by the feeling of dispersal, blurring and dissolving, generally speaking: distancing. Observing the richness of impressions through providing appropriate terminology allows to differentiate sensations and, for example, describe the headache caused by previously drinking too much alcohol as protopathic (dull) contraction. The epicritic tendencies, however, are characterised by the feeling of tightening and insistence. The most obvious example is an intense, even in its verbal aspect described as sharp or acute, pain or sound (e.g. a whistle).

Being involved in the world

Body, with its dynamics, is open and involved in the world, and at the same time – exposed to it. It is a place of feeling and sensitivity, an affected (touched) being (*Betroffensein*). Feeling means being open for richness of density of the environment, by which one is constantly approached, irritated or stimulated, but which can also act soothingly. This can be enhanced through sensitivity, a keenness towards the surroundings, which allows to establish oneself in the environment. Sensitivity allows to notice the inseparable yet sensational element of understanding the environment: sensitivity is the beginning of understanding. It happens through grasping meaningful impressions (*vielsagende Eindrucke*), which are described as striking and clear. It cannot be thoroughly explained and presented, it rather conveys vague, but comprehensive meaningfulness. It is a play of subtlety which still evades definition, but already allows to recognise the situation and situate oneself, ie. act in a given situation or towards a certain human being: "it is the first impression that gives them […] directions for their behaviour towards that person"[24]. To sum it up, this initial sensational understanding can be called a corporeally motivated intuition.

This approach towards the body and its relationship with the world requires a specific conceptualisation of space.

> The world shows up not as a neutral realm of already separate entities but as the atmospheric fields of significant situations, opportunities or quasi-corporeal forces or "opponents" that in the first instance become manifest to the conscious person in form of the "internally diffuse meaningfulness" of holistic corporeal impressions[25].

Space is the realm of co-occurrence, overlapping, standing out and disappearing of various chaotic and dynamic unities which Schmitz defines as situations. By engaging in them, one can distinguish states of affairs, worries, or hardships, with which the affected being is struggling, ways of reacting, acting, and also desires. They appear as what the affected being undertakes, what can be asked about The affected being enters the situation treating it as a meaningful unity and explicates it.

They analyse obtained sensations, which become further manipulated meanings, and other, more discreet, remain undistinguished and create a dense background. This is a good way to perceive many film scenes in which tension is built first, which is important for holding the viewer's attention, raising their curiosity, or setting up an adequate emotional impact. It can be a dangerous situation, like in the restaurant scene (*Lovecraft Country*, 2020) in which tension is built through an exchange of glances, the contrast between white inhabitants of the town and black newcomers, a moment of silence and then leaving the premises. The danger begins to concretise in an overheard conversation which provokes the characters to act, to run, and eventually it realises in the form of a group of armed people.

Corporeal communication

One of the methods to engage the body in the surrounding environment Schmidt calls the corporeal communication. It can be defined as a way of co-occurrence and permeance of the

body (with its dynamics) with the approaching and stimulating environment which reveals itself in the form of power. The affected being becomes noticeably touched and agitated, and it remains affected by the given phenomenon. However, its nature is occasional; through involvement one can become more sensitive and increase the intensity of communication, but also get pushed out of it. Corporeal communication, as a way of navigating through ambiguous impressions, occurs through embodiment (translated as "encorporation" by Rudolf Owen Müllan and Jan Slaby) (*Einleibung*) and disembodiment (*Ausleibung*)[26]. In the first case, an area subjectively felt as own becomes broadened, it incorporates previously distinct elements. In other words, there emerges a relationship based not solely on separate sensory qualities, but on the feeling of unity in corporeal dynamics. It could be even called a corporeal union with the perceived object, "a fusion of synchronising body or bodies, e.g. through a glance"[27]. Sight appears to be a particularly powerful trigger of corporeal communication. By confronting an object – for example, a stone flung towards us – we assess its size, location, flight trajectory, and we duck. Yet this is not based on intellectual evaluations and calculations, devising a strategy of avoiding an obstruction and making a decision to take action – but on unity of body and its surroundings and its cooperation with sight, and on perceiving the situation as a momentary unity. Because of such cooperation a daily walk down the street is not a catastrophic series of collisions. This power of embodiment, together with synaesthetic involvement of the body, was used in the scene from *The Piano*, in which Ada plays on the keys carved in the table and teaches her daughter to sing (to make a specific sound). The touch and visual location of the keys were enough to recall auditory experiences, to figure out the musical scale. Her husband Alistair could not understand this, but it was clear to the audience who knew the heroine's musical passion. In this case embodiment introduced the synaesthetic character of haptic sensations. I shall present the category of synaesthetic characters below.

Embodiment allows to corporeally read and recognise the surrounding phenomena which appear as vital in the given moment. Incorporating them in the body allows for immediate motoric (in the sense of motion) and vital (in the context of the economy of contraction and expansion) interpretation. One can become incorporated, drawn into a network of corporeal influences, against one's will. This is characteristic of another person's glance which affects the whole sense of self. Such an uncanny feeling of being suddenly drawn in could be experienced by the viewers of *Funny Games* (1997) when Paul turns directly to the camera and looks straight at the audience[28].

A special role in corporeal communication is played by so called bridges connecting the body with what is perceived. They are a medium which also triggers communication; they are the dynamics of encountered objects, which stimulate the affected being, the corporeal dynamics. Schmitz distinguishes suggestions of motion (*Bewegungssuggestion*) and synaesthetic characters (*synästhetische Charaktere*). Suggestions work by directing the corporeal dynamics: from contraction to distancing. They apply to sounds: a "welling" noise getting louder, or a "rising" bright tone among the "lower" ones. Every rhythm is such a suggestion, determined by relations of sequence.

This rhythmicity also applies to poetry, which, by releasing a suggestion of motion, more effectively opens the reader for the given poem, for sensationality of the situation merely hinted between the lines. Synaesthetic characters, on the other hand, are complex qualities which belong to certain phenomena, like e.g. warmth and coolness of colours. It is often used in films depicting events in Mexico; white balance is shifted in order to create the effect of heat. In *Seven* (1995); in most scenes cool colours dominate (and it rains all the time, too), but the climactic scene takes place in the desert, which is presented in yellows. Silence also has synaesthetic character: it can be vast and solemn, or pregnant, heavy like lead, confining and protopathically dead: "solemn or soft morning silence is vast, while onerous, heavy silence is confining and protopathically dull"[29]. The characters show the complex way of experiencing sensations and their common aspects. Subtlety of music, similar to gentleness of warmth or slight tiredness, opens the body for yet another synaesthetic character. A great example of the effect of synaesthetic characters is a loud and hissing "shhh", which due to its specific character suggests a very sharply defined action.

Their suggestive power can absorb the affected being so much that it can allow certain situations with their meanings and nuances to be revealed, and feelings to appear. Referring to Gernot Böhme's elaborations, Schmitz recalls the case of a woman who would often experience inexplicable melancholy in the morning[30]. Only after much consideration she associated the smell of a clean towel with her family home. The smell evoked a sensation of a very emotional situation. Through the synaesthetic character one situation emerged, along with richness of meanings and feelings in the form of atmospheres, and revealed another situation from the past. (Such experience was beautifully depicted in *Perfume: The Story of a Murderer*, 2006, when Giuseppe smells the perfume made by Jean–Baptiste). Schmitz describes feelings as spatially but vastly spilled atmospheres – comparable to spatiality of sound[31]. They reveal the nature of feelings, which do not immanently belong to the subject, but appear in the form of drives, encompassing or approaching, engaging the moved being. They can stimulate corporeal dynamics, or be felt as directed forces (of joy or sorrow, directed upwards or downwards), they can have their own density points (localised in the objects of these feelings); some of them, like grief, have strong radiance, which means that they dominate other feelings (one person's joy would be stifled in the presence of a group of grief-stricken people).

Atmospheres emerge from a rich environment and have incidental nature. Different elements of sensory experience can remind about situations or atmospheres and evoke different sensations. To a great extent it is not only a matter of understandable references linking places with certain meanings, but also of details like proper lighting, smells, kind of materials used to finish e.g. furniture, and shapes. In films, appropriate aesthetics, colours, interiors or costumes are used to evoke certain memories, or rather – to build an atmosphere associated with generational experiences, like in the series *Stranger Things* (2016) referring to the climate of the 1980s.

Suggestions of motion also apply to objects with regard to their shape or massiveness, which become included – mostly through sight – in the play of corporeal communication. Sensing the line transcends the limit of a material figure with a suggestion of moving forwards, deeper. In other words, a line is an extended path of sight led by a shape. This dynamics of a line, subject to corporeal communication through suggestions of motion, Schmitz calls the course of shape (*Gestaltverläufe*). In other words, it consists of characteristic suggestions of motion for the given shape, resulting from understanding lines by the involved body.

The philosopher distinguishes two basic forms of shapes: rotund and angular, with different corporeal significance. Round, and mainly semi-round forms have a two-fold aspect: convex and concave. Although they make up a "single" shape, depending on the centre point they have different dynamics and course of shape. Convex motion suggests distancing and expansion, sliding from a semicircle. On the other hand, it can evoke a sensation of contraction, by centring on the most protruding point. However, combining this contraction with expanding arms of the bulge only increases the sensation of distancing. The concave side evokes a sensation of closing, drawing in and embracing.

In case of a spiral twisting around its own axis the dynamics becomes more complex. The spiralling itself can increase the dynamics through shape, but screwing and unscrewing drives it to the extreme. It almost pulls the affected being into its own centripetal swirl. Very intense competition occurs between alternating dominance of welling and tension, contraction and expansion. The opposites are too strong to talk about balance or any corporeal lightness, e.g. characteristic of a wave. Sight does not fix on one spot, but it becomes sucked in by a mercilessly twisting line; there can also be an effect of rising, when it leads upwards. The question is, whether it is a coincidence that often it is a spiral staircase, such as in *El Laberinto del Fauno* (2006), that becomes a portal – through a well – to another world.

Straight lines gain their fundamental corporeal significance by constructing angles, and their courses of shape depend on types of corners they create with other straight lines. Acute angles are associated with contraction, while obtuse angles – with expansion. Usually in the first case epicritic

tendency is dominant, and in the second case – protopathic, but it is not always so. Epicritic tendency is strongly observed in German expressionism, e.g. in *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari* (1920), in which the painted scenography with triangular, sharp and deformed shapes creates an atmosphere of unfamiliarity and unease. A similar effect of tension is achieved through oblique shots, particularly when they are taken exaggeratedly from below or from above of the perceived object of character.

Each shape belongs to one of the above types: the straight and angular, or the rotund. They appear in various configurations and compositions, and each description of them can reveal sensed nuances and differences. They differentiate and dynamise each other. Experiencing them can depend on the level of sensitivity of a given individual, and also on – culturally and historically shaped – corporeal disposition (*leibliche Disposition*), ie. ease and oppenness for a certain type of sensations, which Schmitz examines with reference to the history of architectural forms[32].

Conclusions

Art explores human sensitivity, their corporeal, perceptual and emotional involvement in the world. A film, an audio-visual content presenting certain events and engaging the audience into a given story, affects the viewer on different levels and manages their attention. Even more so – it does not only affect them on various levels (corporeal, emotional, intellectual), but it also relies on corporeal dispositions and on emotional and meaningful nature of certain phenomena in order to create the given content. It presents the story in a framework and through specific rhythm, emotional impact, suggestion of motion, or synaesthetic characters of given situations.

Exploration of the question of corporeal, synaesthetic experience which is not separate from the feeling of meaningfulness of the world around us and various phenomena (such as heaviness of tense silence, a sense of danger in an exchange of glances, recognition of love and tenderness, or of desire through touch) will allow us to better understand the sensory impact of film. Apart from Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, Schmitz's conception provides us with appropriate tools. Schmitz's understanding of the body, openness and exposition for the world explains a lot of various phenomena and experiences linked to colour, shape or sound sensitivity, and also to excruciating and painful sensations which are connected to certain meanings. It is hard to apprehend them in the categories of objects, yet art – including cinematography – has learned to use them very well. Perhaps this is why Sobchack speaks about embodied perception of film also because film gives us access to familiar yet elusive daily life phenomena, or evokes strong and deeply felt sensations which we usually can generally describe with one word, such as grief, romantic love, etc.

A film, like a good art, reveals elusive phenomena, situations from multiplicity of life, and explicates (translates) them in audio-visual form and gives them its own rhythm which engages the embodied and sensitive viewer in a given story.

University of Warsaw, Poland

Notes

[1] The paper was created as a result of the research project no. 2017/25 / N / HS1 / 01626, financed from the funds of the National Science Center, Poland.

[2] Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *Phenomenology of Perception. Translated by* Donald A. Landes. Routledge, 2012, p. 140

[3] Ibidem, p. 245.

[4] Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. "Eye and Mind" *Aesthetics Reader: Philosophy and Painting*, Galen A. Johnson, Michael B. Smith edited. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1993 (121–149), p. 128.

[5] Sobchack, Vivian, *The Address of the Eye. A Phenomenology of Film Experience*. Princeton University Press, 1992, p. 135–136.

[6] Ibidem, p. 142.

[7] Ibidem, p. 143.

[8] The role of memory, also body memory, is analysed by Laura U. Marks. Marks, Laura U. *The Skin of the Film Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses*, Duke University Press, 2000.

[9] Rudolf Arnheim showed exhaustively how sight alone can identify not only shapes and colours, but that the sense of weight and balance are inherent part of perception. Arnheim, Rudolf. *Art and Visual Perception. A Psychology of the Creative Eye.* 1954. University of California Press, 1974.

[10] Sobchack, Vivian, *Carnal Thoughts. Embodiment and Moving Image Culture*. University of California Press, 2004, p. 63.

[11] Ibidem, p. 69.

[12] Ibidem, p.79.

[13] Yacavone, Daniel. "Film and the Phenomenology of Art: Reappraising Merleau-Ponty on Cinema as Form, Medium, and Expression." *New Literary History*, 47, Winter 2016 (pp. 159-185), p. 165.

[14] This perceptive subjectivity of film can also be called the narrator – if in literature the narrator is the telling entity, then in film it is the showing entity, more or less distanced from the given world and the character, or similar to it and limited.

[15] Marks, Laura U. *The Skin of the Film Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses*, Duke University Press, 2000, p. 149.

[16] Sobchack, Vivian, *The Address of the Eye*, p. 162.

[17] Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. "The Film and New Psychology." *New Sense and Non-Sense.* John Wild edited. Translated by Hubert L. Dreyfus, Patricia Allen Dreyfus. Northwestern University Press 1964, p. 58 (48-59).

[18] Yacavone, Daniel."Film and the Phenomenology of Art.", p. 168.

[19] Ibidem, 182-3.

[20] Schmitz, Hermann. *Der unerschöpfliche Gegenstand*, Bouvier Verlag, 1990, p. 29.

[21] Ibidem, p. 135.

[22] Schmitz, Hermann. *Der Leib im Spiegel der Kunst.* Bouvier Verlag, 1987, p. 24

[23] Ibidem, p. 34.

[24] Schmitz, Hermann. "Rozumienie." Translated by Mariusz Moryn. *Swiat, jezyk, rozumienie. Szkice (nie tylko) hermeneutyczne.* Andrzej Przylebski edited, Expol, 2007, p. 69.

[25] Schmitz, Hermann, Müllan Rudolf Owen, Slaby Jan. "Emotions outside the box – the new phenomenology of feeling and corporeality." *Phenom Cogn Sci* 10, 8 Feb. 2011, (241-259), p. 244.

[26] Schmitz, Hermann. *Der unerschöpfliche Gegenstand*, p.137-140. Disembodiment is linked to the feeling of separation, release from one's own body in favour of sensation of predimensional depth or density of a given centre, it is a way of surrendering oneself to distancing without any anchor.

[27] Ibidem, p.137.

[28] Not only sight triggers corporeal communication; hearing is another way of receiving and reacting to the density of surroundings.

[29] Schmitz, Hermann, *Der Leib,der Raum und die Gefühle.* 1998. Aisthesis Verlag, 2007, p. 23.

[30] Schmitz, Hermann, "Über das Machen von Atmosphären.*" Zur Phänomenologie der ästhetischen Erfarung*, Anna Blume edited. Verlag Karl Albert, 2005, p. 37.

[31] Schmitz, Hermann *Der Leib, der Raum und die Gefühle*, p. 23.

[32] Schmitz, Hermann. *Der Leib im Spiegel der Kunst*, p. 81.

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On the Evolution of Film Theory and Aesthetics

DAVID FENNER

In 1933 film theorist and psychologist Rudolph Arnheim wrote a book called *Film* that was added to and re-released in 1957 with the title *Film as Art*.[1] This book with which most serious film theorists are familiar. One section of the book is called "The Complete Film."

In that section, Arnheim argues that technological advances in the film—explicitly the additions of sound and color (and he worries about the advent of the three-dimensional film and the widescreen)—will be responsible for robbing film of its capacity as a medium to be used for the creation of art. "*The complete film*" represents an idealization of a film as thoroughly convincing as a full expression of reality. This, Arnheim claims, is the end of the film as an art form; the expression of reality, fully informed as reality, is not art. As the film moves toward this full expression of reality, Arnheim worries that editing styles like montage and cinematic techniques like changing camera angles will be abandoned. Moreover, Arnheim believed progress toward "the complete film" was inevitable.

Today, "going to the movies" as a class of events is evolving, and, as a case of punctuated equilibrium, it is right now evolving quite fast. The expression "movie," upon reflection, is anachronistic. "Movie" accurately reflected our fascination in 1895 with photographs that moved like real life. We likely all recall the short film of a train pulling into a station—*L'Arrivée d'un train en gare de La Ciotat*—shot by the Lumiere brothers, unedited (no editing much less montage) and with an unmoving camera. The film was a capture of an actual event, recording realistically. "Talkie," an expression evoking nostalgia at this point, reflected our fascination with the advent of sound in our (narrative) films starting in 1927. Even the expression "film" seems anachronistic today as the creation of moving pictures by capturing individual photographs on a reel of celluloid is not "industry standard" any longer. However, the most significant event affecting movies today is the shift from the cinema to the home. On December 10, 2020, the Walt Disney Company, at an Investors Day Event, announced massive plans to move an enormous number of planned theatrical projects either away from cinema release to their home streaming service, Disney Plus, or simultaneous release both in cinemas and on streaming. Disney stock prices the next day jumped almost fourteen percent as investors realized that with that announcement, Disney had substantively and likely irrevocably changed the film landscape forever.

I would like to explore what this change means or may mean for the film as an art form. The implications for the film as an aesthetic vehicle may be substantial, and changes to the film industry may have strong implications for the artform itself. Let us first consider the possible aesthetic changes; then, let us consider likely relevant contextualist changes.

The Aesthetics

When one visually experiences a movie in a cinema, several features are common to this experience. First, the theater is usually very dark. Some signage and some directional floor lighting may be on, but otherwise, the theater is dark. This idea has the effect of concentrating vision on the field of the screen, eliminating visual distraction, enhancing the picture's brightness, and consequently intensifying the colors. Darkness also requires that the picture be as transparent as possible since the focus is intensified. Second, the picture is usually extensive, usually as large as

the available screen. It has been expected for some cinema theaters to become smaller in recent years as larger theaters—IMAX being perhaps the best example—grew in size. Despite this, and even though home televisions and projection systems seem to be growing increasingly more prominent as both technology and taste for such size have grown, cinematic screens are traditionally giant compared to home screens. The effect of large screens at the cinema has meant that pictures must be as straightforward as possible. There can be no unintentional blurriness or soft focus. The picture must be very crisp.

Home screens have undergone more growth in picture clarity than cinematic screens that were already as sharp as technology—available in general and available in the cinema in question—allowed and audiences at least tacitly demanded. Home televisions have gone to "4k" and "8k" and the Blu-ray format—that because of its use of shorter-wave blue/violet lasers as compared with the standard longer-wave red laser used to read DVDs—has allowed televisions capable of sharper pictures with greater clarity and intensity to actualize more of their potential.

Despite this, however, the clarity one can achieve on a home screen will always be limited to the "lowest common denominator" of one's equipment. For instance, even if television is "8k"—which is to say that it produces a picture composed of almost 8000 pixels in width—if one only has a component that receives and sends to that television a 1080p picture (which is to say, standard high-definition)—that has only 1920 pixels in width—the picture is only going to possess the lower level of clarity. This notion has meant for most of us satisfaction with a home picture that is typically less crisp and clear than we see at a cinema, satisfaction based on an appreciation of the speed of gaining clarity as the technology of home screens has increased, but also satisfaction based on an acceptance of the limits of our resources for acquiring the latest technology as it is released. The evolution of going to cinemas to see a movie to watching a film at home may mean that we are, in general, seeing pictures that are less clear than we otherwise would, but just as importantly, being comfortable with that and accepting it as standard.

In homes without dedicated theater rooms, it is common to have televisions placed in rooms where we balance the quality of sight-lines from seating spaces to the television with the practicalities and the aesthetic qualities of furniture placement as it fills the space. This notion almost certainly entails that some will have better views than others, not only because some will be closer to the television or have more direct-on sight-lines, but because those further away or more at an angle will be forced to view a screen that is designed to provide a high-quality picture only to those with optimal sight-lines. Even if homes are increasingly incorporating dedicated theater rooms, these rooms are a decided luxury that requires the resources to have the house-space for such a room and the resources to furnish the room with appropriate technology—"appropriate" technology, not necessarily the latest technology.

Again, this contributes to an acceptance by home viewers of a picture that may not be comparable to the quality found at the cinema. In homes without expansive and dedicated theater rooms, the chances are high that the sound people hear as they experience movies in their homes will be very different from what people might have heard at the cinema. At the cinema, the theater's space usually allows for sound resonance and directionality not available in living rooms or family rooms. Home rooms do not have the volume necessary for high-quality resonance, and even though every theater has "sweet spots" where the sound directionality is optimal, and even though some attention to creating that same context can be had in a home setting, the norm is that we place televisions and sound systems where we can—where they will fit and look good—and this limits optimizing sound directionality even for one person much less all those who may be in the room listening to the film.

The surround sound systems we find familiar in cinema theaters are replicated in homes with varying degrees of success, usually far below the quality available at the cinema. One can hope that the speakers built into the television will be sufficient; one can purchase a soundbar or sound

system in general that will not only amplify and clarify the sound but "suggest" that sound is coming from different parts of the room; one can purchase speakers for placement around the television viewing room that communicate with the component sending out the movie signals by Bluetooth or some other "air-based" system, or one can wire one's television viewing room so that speakers may be placed in ways that surround hearers. All but the first of these approaches require resources and effort to achieve. Furthermore, as I mentioned above, even if one has the ability and undertakes the effort at wiring speakers around a room—to eliminate even the faintest of "hiss" that is common with all "air-based" sound systems—only a select subset of hearers will be placed to experience the sound as realistically surrounding. This notion can be very different from a cinema theater where, though there are "sweet spots," most hearers will experience a more realistic feeling surrounding sound. This cause is less an indictment of the evolution than a prognostication that as streaming overtakes cinema-attendance, our audio aesthetic expectations will evolve in tandem, and we will come to accept a different sort—and sadly likely a different quality—of audio experience.

The film is usually described in terms of sight and sound. While there are movies or movie-like experiences that incorporate or experiment with incorporating other sensory engagement—one might think of Disney attraction experiences that utilize screens that wrap around viewers, that include the release of various scents, and that present tactile expression as seats move, things from beneath seats emerge, bubbles pop on one's face, and water and air are sprayed in one's face—sight and sound likely will continue to be the standard sensory modalities of film experiences. (Until perhaps virtual reality replaces film entirely.)

Despite this, the involvement of other sensory modalities as contextual components of one's cinema-going experience is still widespread. When one sits in a theater, whether in a standard seat or one of the reclining seats populating many American cinemas today, the feel of the fabric, the kinesthetic sense of being upright or inclined, the boundaries of the armrests, the hardness or perhaps stickiness of the floors—all these factors frame the tactile experience one has in a cinema that likely will be a contrast to what one experiences watching a movie at home. No matter how hard manufacturers work to mimic the taste of cinema popcorn, I have yet to find anything that tastes the same. Cinema popcorn—I refer to the standard American salty variety—has a decadent buttery taste that feels indulgent and would likely encourage guilt in health-conscious people if they reflect on what they are eating. The sweet British style might do the same. Popcorn is the iconic cinema snack, but carbonated beverages, a vast array of candy—some tied to cinemas—as well, nowadays, of hotdogs, pizza, nachos, are all part of the taste available the cinema audience member, at least the American one. Add to this list alcohol for the British audience member. While these tastes are not essential components of watching a movie's aesthetic experience, they can figure heavily in such experiences.

Moreover, that, of course, leads into the olfactory. Every cinema experience includes the fragrances of all these available foods, and it has become more commonplace for cinemas attempting to capture new and niche markets to include still more and substantial foods, all of which have odors that permeate the closed space of the theater, mainly with the effect that those without consumables will be inclined to seek them out.

The "feels," tastes, and smells at home will be different. Not necessarily better or worse, but very likely different. Home furniture will feel different; the floor likely will not be sticky. Foods made to be enjoyed while watching movies at home will be less plural, so the associated smells will be more limited and less overwhelming. In addition, one can control the temperature at home by adjusting the air conditioning, heating, or opening or closing windows; something is unavailable at the cinema. In these respects, while the aesthetics attendant to sight and sound may diminish in quality in the evolution from the cinema to streaming, the contextual sensory engagements may be aesthetically enhanced—all perhaps except that decadent popcorn.

More basically than all, this is the notion that when one experiences a movie at a cinema, the experience surrounds and envelopes the audience member. This idea is the case even when the sensory modalities are limited to just two. One cannot pause a cinematic experience; one cannot quickly depart one's seat; one cannot see anything beyond perhaps the exit signs; one cannot hear anything but the movie soundtrack. This enveloping is essentially a central characteristic of the aesthetic of the cinematic experience. Again, unless one has a home theater where the cinematic experience can be substantially replicated, the chances are very high that this enveloping character will be absent. This loss is perhaps the most significant in terms of the overall aesthetic experience. As the formal aesthetic properties and closely related contextual matters alter, the character of the aesthetic experience also alters. Aspects both good and bad, aesthetically speaking, will soften and be less intense in the home experience. The continuity with the ordinary and everyday life will increase, and the "specialness" that experiences colored with the aesthetic aspects indicative of the cinematic experience will decrease.

Community

When one "goes to the movies," one typically experiences community in two different ways. First is the community of strangers who occupy the theater with you; second is the community of those friends and family attending the movie with you. Attending a movie in an empty theatre is something some of us enjoy; some even plan our viewing occasions to maximize the possibility of this occurring. Attending a movie where everyone is shoulder to shoulder may not be as inviting a prospect, but there is a definite charm to that experience as well. The former is preferred in part by those who want to optimize attention on the film, who want the context that encourages such exclusive focus to be as pure as possible, with the most significant limitation on the chances for interruption of any sort.

The latter is experientially valuable because it enhances those aspects of being in a community that such an audience-focused experience has. Other people in a theater add to the emotional response one has to a film as they feel the same and express reactions—gasps, laughs, shouts—in concert with the reactions one has. This intensification is freeing; it is like screaming on a roller coaster. One feels free to laugh out loud or audibly gasp, as others do the same.

Of course, this dynamic can backfire if someone in the audience is not in sync with their film reactions. In Martin Scorsese's 1991 remake of *Cape Fear*, the antagonist Max Cady—played by Robert de Niro—laughs loudly and obnoxiously during a movie. The fun of watching a film intensifies intensely the discomfort of watching someone watch a film badly; this is undoubtedly part of the genius of that scene. The positive community dynamic can also be interrupted if a plurality of movie-watching cultures in the theater. Some serious film viewers regard eating as anathema to creating a film with respect it deserves (of course, this applies only when the film in question does deserve respect). If these viewers are mixed with the sort who find movie watching incomplete without popcorn, raisinets, and a coke, the former will find their enjoyment diluted. Some film viewers regard silence as the only appropriate mode for watching movies; others feel free to speak back or audibly advise characters on the screen. The mixture of these two groups is less than ideal.

There is likely no better example of community ethos in film viewing than the phenomenon that arose around the (Jim Sharman 1975) *Rocky Horror Picture Show* experience in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Talking back to the screen was not only acceptable but was a sign that one was not "virginal" in one is watching the film; the audience ultimately was almost as scripted as the characters on the screen—and eventually, the characters acting out the film on the stage in front of the screen. In addition, it was common for audience members to bring a range of "props" to throw, light, squirt, and so on as the film progressed. Theaters were huge messes after a showing, but audiences delighted in the experience, and many repeated the midnight experience every

weekend for months on end. This delight was occasioned only because of community spirit, shared expectations, and participation.

Some people enjoy attending a movie on our own. We may be making a study of a film—vocationally or avocationally—and with a film that rewards attention, where audience members are as invisible as possible, being on one's own is not only acceptable, it may be helpful. However, this is the exception rather than the rule. As with enjoying a meal out, we were enjoying a film is usually better when one attends with friends. Part of the reason for this I discuss below; part of the reason is the community aspect of attending with others. With others, one has someone with whom to chat before entering the theater; one has someone to share snacks; and perhaps more importantly, someone with whom to compare similar experiences after the movie has ended. This notion is a slightly different dynamic than discussing the film at the water cooler the next day; that discussion likely will only focus on the film itself rather than the broader, inclusive context of the experience of watching the film with another. When you go with a friend or friends, you are attending at the same time of day, as members of the same audience, likely eating (or not eating) the same things, with the same size screen and sound system, in the same room with the same seats and the same smells. This more richly contextualized experience lends itself to a potentially much richer conversation focused on the film and informed by that shared context.

The Contextualized Experience

The cinematic experience of watching a movie does not start when the movie begins. It starts much earlier. One first must decide which film to watch, where to watch it, what time to watch it, and then one must recruit one's friends. One then must get ready and travel to the cinema. One must wait in line to purchase a ticket (if one did not do so in the more typical electronic fashion today), one must wait in line to purchase snacks, and one must wait in line, on benches, or leaning against walls to enter the theater. One then must find one's seat or a seat. Then one waits. When the screen lights up, it is still many minutes before the movie begins. Adverts, previews, and trailers are next, and only after all of this do the lights finally dim, and the actual film begins.

After the film is over, one must decide when to leave the theater—try to be first out? Wait for the initial crowd to dissipate? Wait until after all the credits have crawled up the screen and the lights have come back on? Then there is the walk through the cinema and then out to one's car or the subway. Moreover, this may still not be the end of the experience.

If it is the end of the experience, it comes with discernable chapters, a clear beginning, middle, and end, in the style of John Dewey's description of the aesthetic experience, what he calls "*an* experience," where there is a pronounced narrative arc and one remembers the experience as bounded, focused, and possessing an internal consistency that pervades the whole experience.[2]

To take the cinematic watching of a film to consist merely in the watching of the film is not to do justice to the presence and strength of the contextualities that are endemic to the whole experience. This idea is markedly different from a movie experience at home through a streaming service (or of a DVD, for that matter). That experience will not have such a pronounced or memorable context if it has much of one at all. The experience at home tends to begin only briefly before one press "play" on the remote control and given the ease with which one can pause a film at home to make dinner, answer a phone call, check email, that experience is almost certain to lack the rich structure or content of the whole cinematic experience.

I said above that my description of the cinematic experience might not be complete as far as I took it. It is common for cinematic viewing experiences to be coupled or joined with other experiences involving meals at restaurants or drinks at pubs. Those experiences may be stand-alone experiences, aesthetically, but if they are, in fact, aesthetic experiences, these added adjacent experiences enrich the movie-watching experience by aesthetically "book-ending" it (at least on one side or the other).

Experimentation

When one decides to pursue a cinematic experience, one must be content to accept the limitations of choices that are bound not only by what happens to be playing at a cinema one is willing to travel to but also what is playing at times one wants to watch a film and what one's companions wish to see. It is common for folks to scroll through dozens and dozens of films when picking something to watch at home, and it is not uncommon for a plurality of folks at home to depart for various rooms in the house to watch what they as individuals want to watch. The streaming choices are gigantic, and they are growing by leaps daily.

Not only are films available, but a vast assortment of other viewing possibilities may compete for one's viewing attention. Not so with a cinematic experience where the only thing on offer is a movie, bounded within an hour and a half's viewing time to perhaps as much as three and a half hours (thinking of Ingmar Bergman's theatrical release of his 1982 *Fanny and Alexander*).

If one chooses to "walk away" from a film at home, one only needs to press the remote's stop button. However, if one chooses to walk out of a film in a cinema, one must reckon with

1. The disruption of getting up and stumbling over other audience members,
2. The investment of time and money,
3. Furthermore, whether one is willing to ask one's companions to follow one's sensibilities and lead (which may have been preceded by a whispered discussion in the theater at which other audience members may have expressed displeasure).

Many people choose to stay put rather than run this gauntlet. Occasionally that "forced" continued investment pays off. I had met more people than not who felt they needed a plurality of encounters with Frederico Fellini's 1963 *8 ½* before they finally came to appreciate it. Their investment was a pure act of will, or it was an occasion where, at least on the first viewing, they decided that the better part of valor —regarding sticking it out in a cinematic theater – was the discretion of staying put for the entire run of two and half hours. In hindsight, they may have been happy with their choice. Watching a movie at a cinema comes with risks that do not typically accompany watching a film at home.

These risks may involve pushing one into a level of experimentation that has the potential to pay off in unexpectedly positive experiences of films, or filmmakers, or even in particular forms of film. Experimentation may be available as one scrolls through hundreds of choices at home, but there is no real risk in making one's choice, and so without such risk, the aesthetic investment one might choose to make may be limited. That is, one might invest a total of two and a half hours at a cinema but only invest ten minutes at home. Moreover, with that lack of investment may come a correlated lack of discovery of the new and different.

Artists

Not everyone remains in a theater to watch a movie's credits. The Marvel Comics films (or *Marvel Cinematic Universe*) have encouraged remaining as they include provocative teasers of the following films to come as scenes embedded within or after a film's credits. Disney now owns Marvel, and of course, it was Disney's recent announcement that prompted the writing of this paper. Disney Plus is the streaming service in focus right now—joining the more established Netflix and Amazon Prime and many, many others. Once a film is watched in Disney Plus and the end credits begin to roll, the screen is suddenly minimized to reveal a larger screen behind, suggesting what else one might wish to watch or simply going back to an "entry" screen used in choosing the just-watched film in the first place. In other words, unless one takes the pains to press the right buttons to enlarge it again, the end credits are rendered beyond being visually accessible. Walking out before or during the end credits in a theater does not limit—or does not much limit—the opportunity for those who choose to remain in their seats to view the names of

all the artists and all those otherwise associated with the film's production. Streaming services do limit this—not by removing the opportunity to witness all these names but making it "not the default" to do so. This idea may have the effect of limiting the exposure of those names, which may have the effect of restricting the development of the reputations of those whose names appear in the credits.

This notion may be a minor point, but it still seems a salient one. Many of us know the names of cinematographers, editors, and costume designers from the golden age of Classic Hollywood cinema because the credits ran before the film, and after repeated exposure to specific names, those names stuck in our memories. We are then primed to see those names again, and in recognizing them, we add to the bank of that artist's reputation that exists in our memory. Many people know the name "Ub Iwerks" as very common to early Disney films not only because the name itself is so unique but because it appeared so often at the top of Disney films and because it would have taken heroic efforts not to see those opening credits as we prepared ourselves for the start of the movie. From the late 1920s to the early 40s, Iwerks was almost as important to the production of Disney films as Walt himself, but during those years, we came to know this through watching film credits.

Production

Producers of films who otherwise could count on audiences being pulled into cinemas as potential viewers who recognized the names of directors and actors, who were intrigued by arresting film titles, and who were of necessity more adventurous in their willingness to watch films of which they were unsure, may feel the pull when producing content for home consumption to rely more on upon testing. Proven formulas to engage viewers (which is reinforced by the fact that all streaming services organize their content by category), to rely on capturing the attention of their audiences within seconds of the start of a film (a film like Paul Anderson's 2008 *There Will Be Blood,* where the first words of this film are not spoken until approximately fifteen minutes into the movie, likely would not have a chance), and to consider producing, instead of a stand-alone film, a "long-form series" where continued investment in the content is encouraged for the entire length of the series. While it may be argued that as resources required to create movies has increased dramatically since film's beginning, and so producers must be hyper-vigilant to produce films that will be financially successful, the evolution to streaming as the primary means of accessing film content may accelerate the acceptance that financial success is paramount, and that content must be produced in accord with that aim.

Access

The final area I wish to mention concerning the evolution of "going to the movies" from the cinema to the living room is access change. For this area, my worries are less settled in one direction or the other. For the cinematic experience, we must engage in all the preparation described above, travel to the cinema, and choose from the possibilities. For the home streaming scenario, access to filmic content is achieved in a very different way: one must purchase a subscription to a service, usually accompanied by a monthly bill, and this affords the viewer an assortment of choices that are usually enormous but at the same time ultimately circumscribed by what the service carries. In some sense, the associated commitment is both lesser and more significant than with the cinema: lesser in the sense that the monthly subscription price likely will be less than even a single cinema ticket, and lesser in the sense that one can leave a streamed film quickly and at any time—and more remarkable in the sense that while a visit to the cinema typically is a "one-off" event, a subscription entails at least a monthly commitment but more likely a commitment of years. Then, the commitment to individual films is substantively replaced

with a commitment to the range of provided content. Furthermore, it is unclear whether this is good or bad if our goal is to foster the best aesthetic experiences available.

Arnheim

My aesthetic worries about the evolution of film from the cinema to streaming are clearly of the same sort as Arnheim's worries about the evolution of film from silent black-and-white films that utilized montage as a style for connecting shots and sequencing scenes and cinematic techniques to direct and focus attention to "complete films" that replicated reality in full-blown ways. It would be wonderful if the lesson from recognizing this parallel were "do not worry; be happy; it will all be fine"—that the evolution of technique or delivery of artistic content changes, and not only do we adapt to the changes, but we find that new aesthetic doors open to us. Indeed, with a more extensive technical buffet, filmmakers can do more—have more control, present new spectacles, engage emotion more profoundly—with the new options.

However, my read on the parallel between my worries and Arnheim's is less sanguine. Since the 1940s, films have indeed become increasingly realistic. Many of the conventions of cinematic acting from the 30s and 40s, for instance, would seem alien today. Moreover, by the end of the 1920s, films had already become increasingly and heavily focused on narrative content. Story or plot (different but closely related) was vital, and while cinematography, editing, *mise en scene*, and sound were all essential components in the overall construction of a film's form, narrative held center court. In short, I believe Arnheim's worries were borne out. I believe Arnheim was right in his dour predictions about film's future, and the best evidence for this is that people shunt off "experimental film" to an existence relegated to classrooms and tiny art houses—and we call it "experimental film" to signify that it is not mainstream. However, "experimental film" is precisely that style/genre/kind of film that most closely accords with the world of modern art. As modern art developed and developed its enhanced focus on cognitive engagement as key to the art experience— and as interpretation (interpretive activity) developed as a response—the mainstream film went in a different direction. Only some films today qualify as works of art. Moreover, this is the legacy of the future that Arnheim predicted in 1933.

If there is a lesson for those of us watching the evolution of film from the cinema to streaming, a lesson we can take from Arnheim, it is just this: there is no stopping progress. Arnheim was convinced that the new technological innovations would be embraced, and the ensuing new style of filmmaking would supplant the old style. His final pronouncements on the matter were not a call to revolution or filmic conservativism; they instead read like Stoic advice to adapt to a changing landscape and look for what new aesthetic advancements might be forthcoming as a result. Thus, one can—sanguinely or phlegmatically—do the same. As the Walt Disney Company, on December 10, 2020, effectively altered the film world in ways both very substantive and likely irreversible, it is now our challenge to make the "aesthetic most" of the brave new future.

University of North Florida, USA

Notes

[1] Rudolph Arnheim, *Film as Art* (University of California Press, 2006).
[2] John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: Perigee, 1934).

Book Reviews

FILM, MUSIC, MEMORY. By Berthold Hoeckner. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019. 320 pp.

Berthold Hoeckner's *Film, Music, Memory* is an invigorating read which provides a detailed, critical, different and original dialogue on the manners in which film music plays a role in determining one's' experience of certain films or more simply the relation that music has to cinema and memory. With great criticality Hoeckner shows how cinema's innate visualism is entwined with the auditory faculties of film music which allows for a representation of human memory to flourish. In the cinema scholarship of the recent decades there has been a step beyond the limitations of earlier film theorists and musicologists making critical interjections and headways to the questions of film history and aesthetics especially with regards to the question of film music. Hoeckner furthers these questions by providing a critical and nuanced narrative to the familiar bond that persists between the visual style of cinema to film music and their intimate entangling with narrative markings and thematic propositions.

This book takes one step ahead of stopping at merely tracing the ways in which musical leitmotifs or themes coincide with 'moods or actions' within the schema of narrative films but scrutinizes the ways in which the entangling of visual and music affects the viewers. The function of film music has been deemed as that which accentuates and births the affective responses around a film. Hoeckner tries to unearth how film music can go beyond the signification and evocation of memories by leading the spectator to participate in active measures of recollection to past moments or the extent of a character's memory or recall.

Tom Gunning in his foreword rightly refers to the book as 'an archeology of film listening and viewing' because Hoeckner here theorises an optical-auditory unconscious taking on the Benjaminian optical unconscious as has been interrogated in cinema and photography scholarship. Hoeckner's analysis fills a lacunae where the scholarship on the visual has been prioritised over the aural. The book places itself as a reading of technological memory that lies outside of the paradigm of the human body as he dissects through film scores with informed nuance. The Platonian lament of the atrophying of memory is more pervasive as artificial memory renders one suspect of constantly technologically mediated cultures privileging the act of recording over living memory but Hoeckner doesn't succumb to the trope of this dichotomy between living and technical memory, but shows the technological as a distension of the human. This understanding especially with respect to the question of aesthetics can help the reader understand and mould in news ways how one thinks and feels.

Hoeckner places his critical questioning of memory without assuming it to exist apriori. His role as a critic takes front and centre in this book along with the successful overlapping of theories of film music and memory as well as putting forth a set of tactical tools and ways to understand cinema and memory. As a critic he unearths the authenticities and specificities which are latent to individual cinematic texts through conventional theories and concepts. By taking individual filmic texts in the case studies from Hollywood films such as 'Sleepless in Seattle', 'Penny Serenade', 'Letters from an Unknown Women' and 'Little Voice' to name a few, Hoeckner brings to light unprecedented stratum of intricate ramifications in what have been glossed over through apparently harmonious harkening of memory especially in films that are often unnoticed or discarded by cinema scholarship which he does in the remarkable analysis of 'We Bought a Zoo' as a film text

that treated as equally telling about memory as the art house classic La Jetee. The critical analysis in the book has very little to do with constituting value to a film but in revealing how the mechanisms of mainstream storytelling potentially meshes together tier after tier of emotional lives.

Hoeckner's work demands one to engage with the subtle yet explicit entanglements that memory has with music and story, time and image in the realm of cinema. As cinema scholarship and cinema in itself has defined modern culture and memory cultures Hoeckner illustrates how these changes have been dependent on the mnemonic, recollective powers possessed by film music. Throughout the book he demonstrates cinema's faculty of storing the past and reprojecting it to constantly create new forms of cultural consciousness that are not only shaped through memory in film but memory of film. Hoeckner consciously remains in the realm of cultural history attesting to the dispositions in recent cinema scholarship moving on from traditional ontological and methodological ways to a field paradigm that provides authentic interpretation instead of systematic revelations.

Hoeckner focuses specifically on the representations of memory in American and European cinema, cinema about memory, where cinema becomes conscious of its own history addressed through remakes, quotations or cinema about old methods of film making etc. Debunking the tropes of a historical trajectory Hoeckner builds seven chapters across three thematic sections where concepts and theories which display how music influences cinematic representations of memory in historically specific ways yet reemerge across different historical contexts are shown with authentic criticality. In the first part entitled *Storage,* the consternations pertain to the crossroads where mental and material processes intersect, what Hoeckner says is the 'mnemonic techniques internal to the human body and technologies of an external recording apparatus'.

In the first chapter "Record Recollections," he tracks the shift in the physical autobiographical preservation in the body of the musician to being recorded and stored in material objects like vinyl which he exemplifies through the reading of the film 'Penny Serenade' (1941) and the conjuring of an absolutely new apparatus the 'phono-photograph'.

Chapter 2 entitled "Tertiary Rememories," signpost Bernard Steigler's work on 'tertiary memory' and 'retentional finitude' in its theoretical framework, Hoeckner through the example of Omar Naim's 2004 film 'The Final Cut' talks of the apprehension about the unmitigated socioeconomic aftermaths that are affected by memory technology. Hoeckner complicates Steiglers proposition of the retentional finitude where bodies with exteriorized memory show cinema to be alive and music with its innate temporality to accomplish that promise.

The Second part of the book entitled *Retrieval* has three chapters which outline the role played by music in cinema as a method of retrieval. Chapter 3, "Double Projections," demonstrates how a burgeoning phenomenon where the utilisation of preexisting music as an adjunct accessory to cinema existed during the era of silent films worked to distract its audience. Initially this confrontation of the internal and extraneous realizations were deemed to be confounding; it eventually generated a completely different and authentic mode of intertextuality that reached beyond the discord of the sound and visual to become compounded as an audio-visual experience. And it is this new mode which then became a definitive factor which adds to the recall of cinema within cinema through music. Hoeckner here takes the conversation further through what he refers to as 'critical interferences and formal synchronicities between memory image and screened image' through the examples of the high modernist cinema of Godard and Kluge, pivotal figures in a thriving body of cinephiles as well as audiophile, who used protracted montages implementing familiar music to engage viewers.

In "Auratic Replays", chapter 4 Hoeckner takes examples of American cinema including Woody Allen's 'The Purple Rose of Cairo' (1985) and Nora Ephron's 'Sleepless in Seattle' (1993). He shows through the course of the chapter how the protagonists are much like the cinephiles and audiophiles of the previous chapter who repeatedly watch their favorite films allowing the scope for a 'reenactment' to take place where music plays the part of evoking significant moments or noteworthy scenes which can then be 'replayed' in the real life of the film characters within the films.

In Chapter 5, "Panoramic Flashbacks," Hoeckner takes the example of 'Letter from an Unknown Woman' to explicate how cinematic tools such a flashbacks and/or frame-tale narrations uses the perspective of death to study what he refers to as the 'quasi-cinematic recall' of someone's life. He demonstrates how music, as something obsessive or the origin of an emotion, infiltrates modern life as a memento which harkens back to an encounter or acts to represent one.

The final section entitled *Affect* is the most complex and critical part of Hoeckner's book for it expands the scope into far bigger socio-cultural questions for it deals with music's relation with trauma (where music acts as a mnemonic callback to replay traumatic memories) and affective comportments (music implemented as a way to underline affective connections). In Chapter 6, "Freudian Fixations," Hoeckner bring to notice the connections that complimentary histories of psychoanalysis and cinema as realised in the body of a musician who function as the exemplification of the ways in which events of a traumatic nature get located and locked into the mind and visage of the victim which can only be expunged by living through the trauma to arrive at a moment of 'cathartic cure'. Hoeckner takes the examples of 'The Seventh Veil' and 'Little Voice' to demonstrate how the figure of the performer (most often female) work as a means to contain and communicate childhood trauma. This chapter plays a crucial role for Hoeckner to display the crucial role psycho-analysis persistently plays in cinema wherein Freudian models take front and centre as the way to understand the interlinked bonds that memory shares with culture and technology.

Chapter 7, "Affective Attachments" works as something akin to a foil to the previous chapters where he uses 'I Remember Mama' and 'To Kill a Mockingbird' to explicate how cinematic recollections pertaining to the non-traumatic and nostalgic childhoods perpetrated an aesthetic attachment within the realm of the detrimental aftermath of war or violence. Noting again the cinematic tool of flashbacks from the perspective of the erstwhile young daughter to tell the child-parent story where music guarantees those affective attachments to come to the fore as a representation of the generally trustworthy relationship between a child and their parent and allows the addressal of the trust of the spectator to acknowledge the abstract truth of the cinematic rendition. Hoeckner's captivating conceptualization of the 'Optical-Acoustic Unconscious Trust' helps in the understanding of cinematic recollections maintained through music and films' compl-icated yet omnipresent relationship to music and memory.

Hoeckner shows through the course of the book how sound has the innate ability to transform any image and their ability to store images and function as an indication to retrieve them. He sees the potential of the optical-acoustic unconscious as a medium working within a medium where it negotiates between the similarities of memory and imagination for music beyond recalling images also creating more whereby making the critical assertion that even though the psychoanalytic conceptions of cinema more often than not attempted to hide the cinematic apparatus, audiovisual memory when cinematically represented makes the mode of production a pivotal juncture.

One can easily echo Gunning's comment that 'Hoeckner does for the ear what Benjamin did for the eye'.

TIRNA CHATTERJEE
Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

RITWIK GHATAK AND THE CINEMA OF PRAXIS: CULTURE, AESTHETICS AND VISION. By Diamond Oberoi Vahali. UK: Springer, 2020. 250 pp.

A crucial signpost to the reading of the book is that the personal is political, in this case especially the personage is political. This book is about Ritwik Ghatak, his journey, politics,

ethics, aesthetics, and relationship to the arts especially to cinema. The questions in this book range from that of form and content in cinema, trauma and belonging with respect to the partition, and the politics and language of an artist and an art in its relationship to communism vis-a-vis praxis through the grit of a survivor. This book may be read in various ways beyond the structure of sections and chapters. With many thematic entry points placed across the book the attempt is a cohesive reading of Ghatak. Oberoi Vahali reconstructs and redesigns similar issues across different chapters much like Ghatak, who is regarded by the author as a teacher, through repetition and variation. The same visual motif or aesthetic device is developed and is read on different planes in different frameworks and arrangements.

Oberoi Vahali points to Ghatak bringing forth many contemporary deliberations on a filmic language entrenched in folk forms consociated to myths and legends in order to debunk the inordinately Brahminical (casteist), patriarchal and class discordances innate to the myths. In the author's efforts to study Ghatak's cinema there's a purposive cognition of ideological conceptualization of struggle as it infiltrates and defects through different implicitly inward arguments till it culminates while rallying for the need and search of praxis, though contextually located, that could revolutionise systems from the core. The book tries dedicatedly to connote Ghatak's growing ideas about the possibilities of the cinematic medium with respect to the question of aesthetics and variant aesthetic strategies in terms of lights, sounds and cinematography.

The book proposes Ghatak's cinematic oeuvre to be seen as an epic structure and the films as individual episodes in an epic of the ceaseless "ever moving exodus" (Oberoi Vahali, 2020: 76) where each film, as episodes are unified by thematic and formal motifs. Oberoi Vahali suggests that at the level of discourse Ghatak's individual films move from one to the other whereby each film functions as a chasm wrought into the epic format revisiting this point across the book to show Ghatak's epic form of cinema is workable on the plane of thematic and formal motifs throughout his filmography, finished and unfinished. Oberoi Vahali opines that by placing cinematic signs with innovations of light, sound and image alongside thematic codes, Ghatak creates a metaphor with dialectics at its core, giving rise to an "archi-tale" (ibid:45) where individual films function as variants.

Part 1: "The Making of an Artist" has two chapters, the first chapter in this section "An Overview: Resonances, Influences and Moorings" traces the chronology of Ghatak's artistic journey. Oberoi Vahali discusses many of his works in this chapter tracing the influences which shaped Ghatak's idea of cinema from not only the Indian context but the Soviet School, Japanese Cinema, Italian Neorealism and German Theatre. Oberoi Vahali notes Ghatak's inspiration from film-makers such as Eisenstein, Mizoguchi, Bunuel, Fellini, Hasting, Yuris Evans, Rasil Wright, Flahetry, Ozu, Kurusawa, Rossellini, Godard, Tore Neilsn, Kakoyanis, Bimal Roy and Satyajit Ray; the literary works of Neumann, Jung, Frazer, Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay and Tagore; the theatrical works of Brecht and Bijon Bhattacharya which created and culminated into his philosophical, aesthetic and ethical contention with respect to art, consciously and/or subconsciously. The chapter remarks on Ghatak's notes on and influences from Eisenstein's *Film Form and Film Sense* to Pudovkin's *Film Technique and Film Acting* to Kracauer, Rotha and Manvell's writings. Oberoi Vahali notes Ghatak's rooted connections to the Soviet School through his conversations with Pudovkin and his fellowship with Eisenstein and Kuleshov which influenced his fundamentals on film-making through editing, shot by shot construction, "conflict" as pivotal and the principle of counterpoints but vehemently rejecting "agitprop". This chapter is crucial to understanding the intellectual and philosophical journey and conversation that Ghatak embarked on.

Chapter 3, "A Search for a Personal Vision of Cinema" notes Ghatak's comeuppance as an artist who derived ideas on cinema from different schools to slowly build his own. The chapter meticulously charts his ideations on art, especially his focus on the principle of abstraction and its relationship to the subjectivity of the artist. A running theme in the book which is noted in this chapter is his idea of basing contemporary realities in the realm of folk forms and the correlations

between form and content. The chapter attempts to extract Ghatak's ideation from many of his writings and interviews by locating Ghatak as an artist shaping up in the shadow of partition. The chapter also notes Ghatak's rejection of western school of realism as a sign of modernity to unearth forms rooted in the context of the peoples. The author argues that for Ghatak the principle of abstraction was of the highest accord where a synthesis of the traditional and the contemporary was the ideal wherein dealing with an Indian reality has to be coded formally as something that can be regarded as Indian. Oberoi Vahali notes in this chapter and elsewhere Ghatak's assertions that contemporary reality can be addressed from the past and future which he refined on various levels by tying form and content and by citing the contemporary while locating it within the realm of myths generating discourses on different temporal levels. Oberoi Vahali sees Ghatak's creative journey as geared to search a language which could be "archetypal and realistic" (ibid. 35).

   In the introduction to Parts 2 and 3 Oberoi Vahali further invests in the form of the epics. In "Ritwik Ghatak and the Epic Tradition: Themes, Form and Mythic Interventions" Oberoi Vahali notes the relationship to the epic form in endeavouring to create his own cinema and cinematic language by addressing the trauma of partition. Chap. 4: "An Embrace with the Epic Form" enumerates the ways in which many of Ghatak's films pursue an episodic structure. A striking point noted by the author is how the epic structure is the point of "distanciation" and "subversion" (ibid. 52) that shatters the ideas and assumptions of continuity in/of narrative and the idea of diegesis assimilated in Ghatak's cinema. Chapter 5, "The Magnum Opus of the Bengal Partition and Its Aftermath: Motifs and Antinomies", further examines the structure of Ghatak's oeuvre formulating his filmography as an epic on exodus. The crucial interjection that this chapter builds on is his continued search for praxis within his cinematic language. The questions regarding independence and partition resurge more thematically by investigating loss, exile, mourning, nostalgia, homelessness, class deterioration, political unrest, survival and memory to name some and how these themes are designed through concepts and resistances in his cinema. Chapter 6, "The Angst of Exile: Being and Non-Being" builds on the concept of exile from the previous chapter permeating into the being of the exiled person read through *Subarnarekha* and *Meghe Dhaka Tara* where the metaphor of exile is philosophised and in the analysis of *Jukti Takko Ar Gappo* the concept is taken to the crescendo where the exiled individual is reduced to a vagabond. The chapter draws on the many facets of the psyche of the refugee that is constantly splintering where the self is dismantled by exile through a thematic reading of the refugee psyche. Chapter 7 entitled "Recasting the Contemporary in the Crucible of the Myth: Interventions and Inter-pretations", is a continuation of Oberoi Vahali's formulations of Ghatak's epic structure by tracing the mythic context of his films. Oberoi Vahali notes references within *Komal Gandhar* to Kalidasa's Abhijnanasakuntalam, Mahabharata and Ramayana; *Subarnarekha* to the legend of Nachiketa; *Titas Ekti Nadir Naam* to the legend of Lakhinder and Behula and the Manasamangal genre of Bengali medieval epic. The author reiterates in further detail Ghatak's intent to resculpt the contemporary in the etchings of myths to design a people's mode of expression that would be popular while proactively debunking the mythic stage formulating a contemporary discourse by virtue of the interventions of the spectators by being able to converse with them in not only their inherited cultural codes and collective memory but also trauma.

   Part 3, "Ritwik Ghatak and the Epic Tradition: Cinematography, Movement, Lighting, Sound and Music" has four chapters which discuss the aesthetic strategies of lighting, sound and cinematography of Ghatak. The first chapter in this section, Chap. 8 "Lighting: A Self-reflexive Discourse" looks at Ghatak's lighting strategies and techniques in cognisance to the deliberations on the epic features of his cinematic oeuvre. The chapter displays the various methods of Ghatak's usage of lighting as diverging from the traditional ways of the classical narrative cinema. Through *masking*, *blurring*, *silhouettes*, *long shadows*, *chiaroscuro* among other techniques developed by Ghatak this chapter tries to maneuver the aesthetics and ethics of Ghatak's cinematic oeuvre through shot elucidations from *Bari Theke Paliye*, *Ajantrik* and *Nagarik* which Oberoi Vahali claims is a

reformulation of the 'real' deviced against the classical codes of realism. The second chapter of this part "Sound: A Contrapuntal Melody" talks about the myriad methods of Ghatak's conception of sound and image figured as 'counterpoints' (ibid: 154) illustrated by scenes from *Yein Kyun*, *Komal Gandhar*, *Meghe Dhaka Tara* and *Nagarik*. Oberoi Vahali explores the various creative usages of sound by Ghatak in the form of 'relays' which innovatively weaves assorted sequences. Oberoi Vahali attempts to showcase how Ghatak's various innovations and techniques gear his very creative endeavour to translate the epic plane expressed through his resilient arrangement of sound signs functioning across his cinematic oeuvre to underline dialectics at the core of his politics. Chapter 10, "Cinematography: A Search for a New Cinematic Aesthetics" shows how the epic design of Ghatak's cinematic oeuvre was structured by developing visual motifs present in varying degrees across his films through the expression and utilization of *distance*, *movement*, *angle*, *duration*, and the positioning of camera lenses and movement of the characters by using techniques of light and shade. Oberoi Vahali elucidates how Ghatak conceptualised specific visual markers such as *slow turns*, the *upturned gaze*, *slow movements*, *below the knee shots*, placing objects and characters in the farthest corners of the frame and the creation of various spatial zones and contrarian movements for a single shot elucidated by Oberoi Vahali through shot analyses from his films. The concluding chapter of this part Chap. 11, "Metaphor: The Abstract Conceptual Domain" attempts to explore the ways in which Ghatak's cinematic technique gets ultimately transmogrified to metaphors. Oberoi Vahali demonstrates how many of Ghatak's pure cinematic signs are put together with loaded thematic motifs to develop the metaphors which account for history, myth and the contemporary.

Part IV, "Film and Praxis: Countering the Orgiastic Dance of Vested Interests" diligently invests in Ghatak's political vision of cinema which questions the traditional logics behind independence and ideas of nationalism and looks at Ghatak's quest for praxis rooted in the thematic and the subversive. Chap. 12: "Marxism and the National Question", the first in this section, looks at the nationalism question in Ghatak's cinema as the prime thematic issue. The author shows how Ghatak's cinema posits an argument to the question from a Marxist–Leninist perspective and how he locates his cinema through questions regarding the manufacturing of nationalism; the partition of India; and the everyday horrors of and on its citizens. Oberoi Vahali ruminates that Ghatak's cinema issues a powerful proclamation deeming the Indian state as betraying its people. The next chapter "In Search of Praxis: A Political Odyssey" delves into Ghatak's captivation with Left ideology since his early associations with IPTA and the changes in his understanding of the Left in his cinema across the years. Oberoi Vahali tries to show that Ghatak's reactions to the exercising of the left ideology is a criticism of the CPI. Through the example of his last film *Jukti Takko Aar Gappo* Ghatak lays his claims for a praxis demanding that the Left ideology obtain a form that is grounded in the peoples, their culture and context to ever be able to spark a people's movement. Chapter 14: "Film and Praxis: A Search for a Subversive Language of Cinema" tries to demonstrate the multiplanar devices in Ghatak's search for praxis. Oberoi Vahali attempts to analyse how his cinematic techniques arrive at praxis to charge into the arena of social, political and psychic metamorphosis. The author pertinently analyses how through different subversive aesthetic strategies Ghatak incessantly struggled against the conventional codes of classical narrative cinema.

Part 5: "Angst, Resilience and Survival: Who is it who thus Lives and Dies?" details Ghatak's struggle with the Communist movement and the role of art as an ideological machinery. The first chapter in this section, Chap. 15: "Marxism, Art, Culture and Praxis" gives a detailed analysis of the "Draft of the Policy Principles of Indian People's Theatre Association" (1951) that Ghatak co wrote with Surapati Nandi and "On The Cultural "Front" submitted to the CPI in 1954 situating these in the larger context of debates happening in Marxist circles around the world to note how Ghatak iterates the boundless aesthetic possibilities of art practices when Communist associations dialogue with 'humanitarian artists' which bear the potentials to radicalise different art practices in India that would then lead to praxis. Chapter 16, "The Angst of an Artist: In the

Shadow of Death", takes off on the previous chapter locating Ghatak in the Left politics of late 1940s and early 1950s India. Oberoi Vahali cites Ghatak's troubled relationship with the CPI and the IPTA leadership and his subsequent expulsions to see the psycho-social dimensions of Ghatak throughout his life journey and his many commercial/popular failures. Oberoi Vahali tries to analyse the angst of Ghatak who strived to stay committed as a filmmaker and to his politics and art, which were inextricably hinged onto the other. Chapter 17, "Resilience and Survival" is a befitting final chapter to a book on Ghatak read through the motif of the "survivor". Oberoi Vahali builds on the metaphor throughout the book to this culminating chapter where akin to the protagonists of Ghatak's cinema who may die but in death the struggle isn't over but is rejuvenated creating the space for something new to spring.

TIRNA CHATTERJEE
Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

AFFIRMATIVE AESTHETICS AND WILFUL WOMEN: GENDER, SPACE AND MOBILITY IN CONTEMPORARY CINEMA. By Maud Ceuterick. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020. 186 pp.

Maud Ceuterick's *Affirmative Aesthetics and Wilful Women: Gender, Space and Mobility in Contemporary Cinema* argues that theoretical considerations beyond the binary models of gender, space, and power in film theory requires a reassessment and a new vocabulary. Through fluid models of spatial relations taking on from Sara Ahmed, Rosi Braidotti, and Doreen Massey, this book tries to understand wilful, affirmative, and imaginative realizations of gender on screen. Through a micro-analyst approach of *Messidor* (Alain Tanner, 1979), *Vendredi Soir* (Claire Denis, 2002), *Wadjda* (Haifaa Al-Mansour, 2012), and *Head-On* (Fatih Akin, 2004) the author tries to locate and explicate affirmative aesthetics. Ceuterick's affirmative aesthetics question the gender categories and power structures which have been seemingly determining habitation in homes, cars, and streets.

She propounds that cinematic forms have the potential to create affirmative 'cracks' (in Deleuzean understanding) in the patriarchy within realist narratives whereby she deems not only characters but also films as "bodies of affects" (Ceuterick, 2020: 13) that comprises space as being wilfully affirmative. The protagonists of Ceutrick's critical analysis engage in processes of transformation of the 'power-geometries' that subdue them expressing their wilfulness through affective forms and shaping an aesthetics of affirmation. It is also through each film's understanding of the patriarchal limitations on space and mobility for women that cinematic spaces become 'spaces of wilfulness' which the female bodies completely inhabit.

The first chapter is the "Introduction: Gender, Space, and Affects in Film" which is detailed in its theoretical and conceptual intent. Divided in two parts, the first part provides a methodological design through which the author explores the ideas of space as space-time in continual transformation to examine how cinema produces transformative affects hence discourses. Further how spaces on screen are created through filmic forms and bodies. The second part is an important revisitation to Rosi Braidotti's 'affirmative politics' and Sara Ahmed's 'wilfulness' as conceptual and theoretical signposts. An important assertion from the introduction is the author's understanding that cinematic representations of diegetic spaces add to a certain reclamation of space from ostensibly strict power-geometries as seen on screen. The affirmative aesthetics of cinema that the author is talking about takes wilful female bodies inhabiting spaces regardless of the normative and aesthetic strategies. The intent for the writer is not to pitch affirmative aesthetics

as simply positive representation of women but to look into and through feminist works that raze binaries to allow a spectrum of "fluid genders, spaces, and identities"(ibid, 38) as it also tries to reflect on the possibilities of doing affirmative critique.

Chapter 2, "Women's Road Movies and Affirmative Wandering" is an analysis of *Messidor* through which Ceuterick tries to debunk the problematic depictions of the 'dangerous' and/or 'lost' women as represented in the male-centric road movie genre seeing the film's aesthetics as transgressive and transformative. Through three contested spaces namely the car, the road and home the author shows how Messidor isn't centred on ideas of self-transformation and realisations of the meaning of home but the wilfulness of becoming and being mobile. The question of mobility is addressed herein through *Messidor* to elucidate the limits of considering the mobility of women in the same terms as men's necessitating new tools and vocabulary to understand space and affect where wilfulness becomes a vital political tool. Ceuterick's micro-analysis of the diegetic spaces, the narrative and the relationship between the film's two protagonists makes a remarkable point which reveals the film's affirmative aesthetic in face of the negativity present within the diegesis, which through the characters' affective relations to space, show that the film aesthetically extricates mobility from a masculinity, power and the idea of home.

Chapter 3 entitled "Cars: A Micro-analysis of Space and Bodies in *Vendredi Soir*" takes Appadurai's contention of imagination as a social practice as quintessential to this chapter's analysis of Claire Denis' film *Vendredi soir* (2002) to illustrate the ways in which imagination takes urban space beyond gendered and power relations. Ceuterick reads the film as questioning the patriarchal structures of social spaces and mobility where Paris is brought to a standstill through a car stuck in traffic. The film is in a way read through three different spaces that of the apartment, the car, and the motel which Ceuterick argues is the interweaving of "representational, haptic, and magical-realist" (ibid, 60) spaces that give rise to affirmative and affective aesthetic. The author demonstrates how the protagonist's car goes from being initially a domestic space to a liminal one and ultimately into a space of desire and intimacy. Ceuterick deems the 'wandering' cinematography to allow the protagonist a "magical or meta-cinematic mobility" (ibid, 74). This chapter shows how the continued shuttling between patriarchy and the embodiment of space is where the affirmative political intentions of the film lies as it effectively morphs the gendered nature of space and mobility.

Chapter 4, "Houses and Wilful Women: Wadjda" includes Ceuterick's initial attempt to question the hetero-patriarchal rules that define the street and the context of where, how and by whom the film is shot. She traces the ways in which wilfulness effectively compels changes to filmic forms. This chapter shows how "the aesthetic construction of space" (ibid, 100) and the lived body of the protagonist and her mother assert their wilful forms in varying degrees depicted through the micro-relations within the home, the school as a space of manifestation of discipline and obedience, the roof of the house as a Foucaldian 'heterotopic' space and the street. Wadjda and her mother inhabit various places they are mediated by objects as well like plates, veils, phones, doors and bicycles which arbitrate wilfulness to allow for wilful forms to become expressed. The most pertinent assertion in this chapter is that of affirmative ethics which shows wilfulness as filmic forms and the ways in which affirmative ethics relates to understanding the many limitations and dimensions of freedom. Ceuterick regards the wilfulness of the protagonist as "micro-instances of activism" (ibid, 26) positing the *one who stays*, as wilfully inhabiting spaces while reshaping the complexes of power across spaces.

Chapter 5, "*Streets: Freedom, Diaspora, and the Erotic in Head-On*" builds on the arguments of the previous chapter where Ceuterick suggests that inhabiting space is contingent to time therefore context. Ceuterick reads the female body's inhabitation of the cinematic space as going beyond gender expectations using the Deleuzean 'cracks' to demonstrate how the formal representations of bodies and space crack open, sever, or suspend the status quo that exists in the diegetic space though faintly or transiently. The author utilizes the term abjection to take a more complex look at the female body focusing on the street as a contested diegetic space. While the performance of

gender appears as a spiral from which one cannot escape, it also appears as a means to disrupt established roles and the myth of subject identities governed by gender and racial categories. This chapter shows how dancing, walking in the citystreets, connecting to the erotic and abjecting one's body as taking affirmative forms. The author through this chapter attempts to reveal the film's creation of space and bodies as processes in sustained transformation while being essentially focused on the ways in which the woman protagonist inhabits the city wilfully. The author tries to specifically demonstrate how different scenes of dancing in the film connotes the protagonists complete habitation of the cinematic space, her wilfulness, and identity. This chapter tries to argue that abjection can take a wilful form as an act of resistance to the ever complicating nexus of gendering and racialisation of the self. Recognizing the complexity of uninhabitable subject identities Ceuterick's propositions in this capter that the erotic and abject forms affirmatively underscores the scope for the conception of subjects as 'deeply liminal'.

The women in Cauternick's book can be found in spaces that are historically exclusionary or legitimised as masculine. The book travels to filmic representations of women's spatialities and locates a language to extract affirmative movement from representations to challenge the problematic of replacing women through binary models of gender and mobility. The 'fluid' understanding of space designed in the book allows varied readings of gender on screen with a sustained focus on depicting women characters, their relationship to space, mobility and imagination.

TIRNA CHATTERJEE
Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

EXPLORATIONS IN CINEMA THROUGH CLASSICAL INDIAN THEORIES: NEW INTERPRETATIONS OF MEANING, AESTHETICS, AND ART. By Gopalan Mullik. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020. 351 pp.

The relationship between literary theory, philosophy and films is accurately summarised by Gopalan Mullik in the introduction to his book, with an initial focus on Western philosophers. Irrespective of the comprehensive nature of the introduction, the initial pages set the tone of the book and its purpose: to provide a stimulating Indian addendum in the Western understanding of films through its philosophy. Upon realising that "classical Indian theories would not make sense to the readers unless a Vedic paradigm of thought was constructed as its basis" (Mullik, 2020: 9), he sets out to construct this paradigm himself. This daring and novice attempt situates Indian philosophy in the picture of the world's understanding of cinema. The five chapters penned down by Mullik chart the progress of the book, from an overwhelming dependence on Western thinkers to understand cinema that might not be essentially Western, to developing a structure which could assimilate both Indian and international cinema from a decidedly Indian perspective.

The first chapter (after the Introduction) works its way through the methods of André Gaudreault and Tom Gunning in their representation of "Early cinema", after it critiques classical, contemporary and cognitive film theories for their shortcomings. This critique comes from an omniscient perspective, and substantiates itself with an internalised understanding of Indian and Western theories about appreciation of art and literature. Notwithstanding the development of film theories based on the narrative style, this chapter contradicts Ingmar Bergman's "The Making of film", "When I show a film I am guilty of deceit. I am using an apparatus which is constructed to take advantage of a certain human weakness, an apparatus with which I can sway my audience in a highly emotional manner – to laugh, scream with fright, smile, believe in fairy stories, become

indignant, be shocked, be charmed, be carried away or perhaps yawn with boredom". Whereas Bergman posits the art of film-making as an artificial process, Mullik understands films as an independent and autonomous identity.

The second chapter functions as a statutory warning to the uninitiated; starting from the law of conservation of energy, Mullick quickly jumps to an Indian paradigm to understand aspects like Nyaya-Vaisesika, Mimamsa, Samkhya-Yoga, Advaita Vedanta and Kashmir Shaivism, all of which are intertwined interdependently. This chapter deals with the complexity of these functions, to show how "a proper study of them can throw new light on how different cultures negotiate reality and the arts including that of cinema" (Mullick, 2020: 65). The chapter delineates the narrative styles used in Vedic cosmology, and shifts to the larger implications in World philosophy in the context of an Indian understanding of time and space, which are subsequently reflected in the making and understanding of films. For instance, in the last section of this chapter, he refers to the work of Alice Boner to illustrate the subtle yet sure differences of the Indian and Western ways of understanding culture through sculptures and their geometric implications, and how that could be used to understand the broad world of cinema.

The relationship established at the brief of the third chapter, "Mode of Appearance in Perception = Qualificand + Qualifier + Relationship" (Mullik, 2020: 103) reminds one of the structuralist paradigm of meaning, which is essentially the difference between the signifier and the signified. The chapter is indebted to Saussure and his *Course in General Linguistics,* since the qualificand and the qualifier share many characteristics with the signified and the signifier, respectively. Mullik sways swiftly between narrative integration where he situates an incident and art as a whole, and the various levels of perception (simple and complex) which could be used for understanding each element of a film separately. This apparent dilemma contributes to the versatility of the book, where every possible aspect is explored to its deepest possible depth. This chapter smoothly sails through the theory of absence (which has often been used, from Western perspectives to understand cinema), visual synesthesia, and moves to a Lacanian understanding of the intersectional aspects of the Sassurian understanding of sign, and his understanding if the generic divisions of cinema.

The fourth chapter deals with a more direct relation between the navarasas and cinema. The evocation of *rasa* and *sringara* in the body of the actor while they perform on stage, is reminiscent of how an actor performs for the camera. Bhatta Nayaka's breakthrough about "the audiences' prior knowledge that an artwork is a "fictional" work [that] generalizes their experiences" (Mullik, 2020: 205) is true for both cinema and theatre, and Mullik here essentially extends the reading of the *Natyasastra* onto the domain of film studies. This unique attempt at unifying the three kinds of aesthetic categories of relish, saturation and immersion into a broader understanding of visual media has multiple implications in interdisciplinary research. When Mullik writes about the Indian notion of *darsana* and the voyeuristic connotations of it, the way a film or a play is viewed comes to mind. This chapter fundamentally questions the methods used to comprehend and apprehend cinema as a form of art, and analyses whether a layman has any authority or agency to analyse such a piece of art, since they are just staring at a two or three-dimensional space.

The fifth chapter, which conglomerates Indian aesthetic theory with art, is reminiscent of Satyajit Ray's words in his *Our Films, Their Films,* "In the immense complexity of its creative process, it [cinema] combines in various measures the functions of poetry, music, painting, drama, architecture … and it also combines the cold logic of science with the subtlest abstractions of the human imagination" (19). The revival of lost sensations through *dhvani-sastra* is best expressed through cinema, according to Mullik. Amalgamating the positions of Ray and Mullik, cinema can be thus understood as the medium which unites the five modes mentioned in this final chapter. The suggestive nature of dhvani finds itself linked to the multifarious world of cinema, and the connective link remains the wide array of possible and suggestive interpretations offered by both of these creative expressions. When Mullik connects the unifying principle of Brahman = Atman to films, it comes as a surprise that he uses an Italian film, Federico Fellini's *La Dolce Vita*

(1960), to illustrate the use of sound and its importance in the context of films. An Indian film like *Goopy Gayen Bagha Bayen* (1969), where the protagonists use their "divine"[2] music to entice the listeners and thus solve the problems between the kingdoms of Halla and Shundi, would perhaps have been a better fit.

In the concluding section, the book questions the logic behind using Western theories to understand cinema, especially when the demand and production of cinema in India is more than the average demand of it in the West (Mullik: 2020, 314). Mullik does a convincing job of extracting examples from both the West and India to illustrate his rhetoric of an Indian theory of understanding films. This attempt, both novice and thorough, reeks of a postcolonial aroma around it, indicating the intention (albeit secondary) to place Indian theories at par with their Western counterparts, as opposed to submitting to the Western theories with the blatantly wrong assumption that India has no substantive answer to the questions which are raised by film theory and critics, while in their attempt to appreciate or criticise films.

ARITRA BASU
University of Delhi, Delhi

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Nickolas Pappas is Professor of Philosophy at the City University of New York's Graduate Center, USA where he teaches courses on Plato's philosophy. He is the author of several books, including the *Guidebook to Plato's Republic* and *The Philosopher's New Clothes: The Theaetetus, the Academy, and Philosophy's Turn against Fashion*.

Thomas E. Wartenberg is Professor of Philosophy Emeritus at Mount Holyoke College, USA. His main areas of focus are aesthetics, the philosophy of film, and philosophy for children. Among his publications are *Thinking on Screen: Film as Philosophy*, *Existentialism: A Beginner's Guide*, and *Mel Bochner: Illustrating Philosophy*. He has edited or co-edited four volumes on philosophy and film, *Fight Club (Philosophers on Film)*. He is Film Editor for *Philosophy Now*.

Ioannis Paraskevopoulos has studied Film Studies at Middlesex University and University College London (UCL). He holds a PhD in Philosophy from the National and Capodistrian University of Athens and has also studied filmmaking as well as theory and practice of sound in the works of French critic and composer Michel Chion.

Feroz Hassan is Assistant Professor of English at the Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur (IITK), India. His work deals with the history of film theory, with a focus on questions of aesthetics and politics. He is currently completing a book manuscript on André Bazin.

Thomas Wachtendorf studied philosophy and political science at the University of Oldenburg in northern Germany. He received his PhD in 2007 for this thesis "Ethik als Mythologie – Sprache und Ethik bei Ludwig Wittgenstein" (Ethics as Mythology: Language and Ethics in the Work of Ludwig Wittgenstein). He has published on topics concerning the philosophy of Wittgenstein, ethics and existentialism.

Shawn Loht has taught in the philosophy departments at Tulane University, Mercer University, and Pennsylvania State University, USA. He is also an institutional researcher at Baton Rouge Community College, USA. He has written on phenomenology, the philosophy of film, and ancient Greek philosophy.

Frank Boardman is Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Worcester State University, USA. He has worked predominantly in the philosophy of art, with excursions into logic, ethics, metaphysics, epistemology, and political philosophy.

Michael Newell Witte is an art historian, theorist, and translator. He is currently a PhD candidate in Art History, Theory & Criticism at the University of California, San Diego, USA.

Paolo Babbiotti is a PhD student of philosophy at the FINO Northwestern Italian Philosophy Consortium. His work focuses on ethics, aesthetics, and the history of philosophy. His PhD thesis is on the problem of style in philosophy.

Isabel Hernández–Gil studies philosophy at the University of Cambridge. She has completed courses at Yale University, Oxford University, and Sorbonne University. She takes interest in aesthetics and history of philosophy and her current research focuses on Hannah Arendt's Ethics.

Katarzyna Weichert is a researcher at the University of Warsaw, Poland. She holds a PhD and her areas are aesthetics, hermeneutics and phenomenology, including Hermann Schmitz's new phenomenology. She leads the grant project "The Poietic and Critical Model of the Imagination in Selected Theories of Aesthetics".

David Fenner is a Distinguished Professor of Philosophy and Art at the University of North Florida, USA. He specializes in Aristotle, art criticism, artworld ethics, environmental aesthetics/ethics, ethical theory, metaphysics, philosophy of film, value theory, and philosophy of art.

Tirna Chatterjee is a PhD scholar in the Department of Cinema Studies in the School of Arts and Aesthetics (SAA), JNU, New Delhi. Her research is on the philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of boredom in the post-partition cinema of Calcutta.

Aritra Basu is an MPhil Research Scholar at the Department of English, University of Delhi, and is working on the translatability of riddles in Feluda.